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CHATTO AND WINDUS

HORIZON

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COMMENT

GENTLEMEN,

The offensive against Art is developing according to plan. It is too early yet to prophesy total victory, too early even to talk of a break-through or to indulge in wishful thinking about a complete mopping-up of art and artists. We must not underestimate the foe. But it is worth while recapitulating what has been done. A year ago this magazine, under the title of 'The Cost of Letters', published a bundle of documents which revealed that the morale of our enemy was sinking fast. Economic warfare was making itself felt all along the line. Last winter a brilliant exploit deprived the enemy of all paper supplies for more than a month, and another daring raid put their dangerous radio station, Third Programme, out of action for a considerable period. What was particularly encouraging about this brief campaign was the feebleness of the enemy's response. Meanwhile our blockade was not ineffective. We may now proudly claim that, while the steady shipment of the entire antique collections of this country to America proceeds unhindered, it is almost impossible for a contemporary work of art to pass from one country to another. If it is extremely difficult for a painter to move around the world or export his wares, it is quite impossible for anyone else to go abroad to look at painting. There is only one cause for alarm. We have effectively sealed off the whole civilian population from access to the Continent and its dangers; we have even reimposed a rudimentary censorship. But have we been sufficiently thorough in preventing foreigners from coming here? The autumn has seen the blockade of pictures, tourists, etc., one hundred per cent successful with films and sheet music added to the list. But the most daring coup was the banning of the import of foreign books; a feat which held that quality of surprise, rapidity and ruthlessness which indicates the born commander. Though the contents can never rival our own, foreign books are—were, I should say—sometimes speciously well printed; the margins immorally wide and the paper indecently thick; the sentiments expressed often well informed and subversive. I don't think we will any of us regret them.

And now I have to pass on to a very unpleasant subject. There exists, as you know, a fifth column in this country. There are artists, writers, poets, crypto-artists and crypto-writers, survivors

from the bad old days, over whom the authorities have insufficient powers. There are even one or two publishers or reviewers who compose in their spare time. I blame no one for this; I blame the system. But something must be done. The paper control has just cut the ration of periodicals by ten per cent. That is a step in the right direction, a most salutary step. It will be followed, I hope, by further cuts and by the rationing of fuel to printers and binders in such a way that these very inessential industries are compelled to liberate their manpower for the national effort. It will become increasingly difficult, I am afraid, for gentlemen of the literary and artistic persuasion, when forced out of their Bloomsbury bed-sitting-rooms by cold and hunger, to avoid taking a few tottering steps in the direction of the welcoming sign 'Labour Exchange' where 'guidance' will be freely given to them—with perhaps a shave and a haircut thrown in. But these are slippery creatures—and this is where the public can help. You all hate à spiv (Yes, SIR!)—You all hate an Eel (I'll say we do!)—You know what to do with a Drone, a second-helping wallah, a lipstick lovely, an aesthete (Leave 'em to us); You know the right noise to make when you see a Butterfly (Brrrrerp!) You've been put on your guard against the Gander in his club window—you've been warned against the Royal Turbot, with her French perfume and gigantic hat. I want to warn you against the Artist: I want you to learn to hate him like a whale. We've made short work of the whales lately (cheers); it's no secret that there soon won't be a whale left. (Loud cheers.) Radar, depth charges, blubber bombs—their number's up. Why is it that we all love a journalist, a civil servant, a P.R.O., or a Member of Parliament when we see one? Yet we all hate instinctively an artist! I'm going to call them 'bats' to you, because they squeak, because they have no morals and hang upside down and smell and spend the day in a terrible fug and look revoltingly like human beings. (Laughter.) I'm going to appeal to you to rid our island workshop of our flittermice friends—every one of them from the greedy Flying Fox to the dirty little Pipistrelle. You don't have to interfere with them. Leave that to *us*. (Laughter.) The public has a perfect weapon ready. Apathy. (A voice—Spell it!) Just don't think about them. That's all. You've got plenty to think about. Rations, the new cuts, the potato shortage, bigamy, the last six murders, the latest smuggling fines, the

long-skirt controversy, the Royal Wedding, the airplane disasters, the Marshall Plan (all aid short of peace), the electric cheater and the staggered geyser, holidays with P.A.Y.E. And I'm glad to see that you're reading less. I'm told that books are getting nearly as hard to sell now as before the war. I hope we shall soon live to see the book and periodical entirely superseded by the bulletin and communiqué. (Cheers. For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!)

A word about morale. Morale is good. There is nothing wrong with the people. Their kettle is fine. We are all too busy to read or think; our minds are entirely occupied with material problems; there's nothing so healthy as having to devote all one's energies to the next meal. But sometimes we get a bit blue and then we like to wrap ourselves in the Union Jack and pass moral judgements. Here are a few sayings which I find of great comfort, and which I hope some of you will.

'Thou shalt hate thy neighbour as thyself!' This, I think, is all we really need to know about the bogus modern science of psychology. 'Hatred begins in the home.' That is why we invented the State. 'He preyeth best who hateth best all things both great and small.' 'Hate and it shall be given unto you.' This I take to mean that if we can hate a class and then all other classes, a nation and then all other nationalities, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the male and the female, then we can end by hating not only the living but life itself. And not until we hate life are we ready to take a creative part in shaping the twentieth century. And remember, Art is the flower of life; it is what is most living. We must cut down the blossom till we have learnt how to uproot the plant.

At present we are passing through a phase of voluntary compulsion. That will fail and be succeeded by a phase of compulsion which will restore the controls and penalties of our 'finest hour'. I see one ray of hope: remember, whatever miseries we endure, they are endured to the full by other nations, and among those nations there are rulers so forward-looking as to regret the good old days of war (sound, if not safe) as much as we do. I don't think we shall have to wait long, gentlemen, before I return to my old and treasured post as HORIZON's military spokesman.

'Decay along with me
The worst is yet to be.' (Ovation.)

FRANZ BORKENAU

AFTER THE ATOM

SUPPOSE there should be another world war, what will be the destiny of Western civilization? I am not predicting that there will be another world war. It is too early for positive assertions in this matter. But few people will deny that it is a real possibility. In view of the uncertainty of coming events speculations based upon the worst may seem a piece of irresponsible scare-mongering. But *if* the worst happens, there may be scant opportunity for contemplation after the event. With wide-open eyes and knowing the stakes, we are facing the possibility of ultimate disaster coming to us in perhaps less than a score of years. Is it not our duty to do our best to think out the implications while there is still time to think, to try now to find an orientation for the worst case? In smaller matters it may be wisdom to let an emergency come, and to trust nature to find a remedy. In supreme issues such as these, indifference, not foresight, is the final capitulation.

Trying to visualize the shape of the world after a supposed atomic war, we must first register the foreseeable elements in such a clash. Assuming that the Western democracies are at present still sole possessors of the secret of the atomic bomb, these Western powers would find their military advantage in striking now, in making preventive war. No eighteenth-century cabinet and few nineteenth-century cabinets would have shrunk from such a decision (they had no atomic bombs at their disposal, of course, and the stakes were infinitely smaller). But it is certain that neither America nor Britain will go to preventive war now. The struggle against Hitler has amply proved that no Anglo-Saxon democracy of our age ever fights a war except under direct threat of extinction; and the present trend towards military retrenchment in both countries, in the midst of growing international tension, confirms this forecast. There will never be war unless a totalitarian power goes to war. As the twentieth century proceeds the story about capitalist imperialism inevitably going to war has become complete nonsense and vicious demagogery. The only problem is whether totalitarian dictatorships can be prevented from going to war in the long run. I am not going to try to answer this query at present.

But if Russia, the one big remaining totalitarian power, should at some time go to war, we should not imagine that she will walk in Hitler's footsteps. Germany was quite unsuited for the task of world domination, and only a maniac with an hysterical following could make the attempt—apart from the invitation to try proffered by Chamberlain, Daladier and the rest. Next time, if there is to be another time, there will presumably be no such attempt at abject surrender on the part of the democracies, but also the aggressor will not go to war with such hectic and fundamentally inadequate preparation as Hitler did. It is, among other things, quite unlikely that Stalin himself wants war or will make war. No man of his age would after such ordeals. If, at some later time, Russia goes to war, she will have tested the ground well in advance, and thoroughly, and will feel sure of success. The *present* high state of international tension is largely, though not exclusively, bluff.

Now, it is one thing for the Russians to feel sure of victory and quite another thing for them to win. I am convinced that for the most deep-seated reasons no totalitarian power is capable of correctly assessing the balance of strength between its own power and that of its democratic adversaries. Dictatorships cannot understand the intrinsic strength which lurks behind the surface weaknesses of democracy. And a totalitarian dictatorship cannot even correctly assess the various technical factors affecting the overall balance of strength, because no country, in an atmosphere of propaganda and terrorism, can properly assess its own defects and its adversary's advantages. Not for a moment do I doubt that the democracies will win in the end, though a dictatorship always feels sure of victory in the beginning. All dictatorships overrate themselves; also all democracies tend to underrate their own strength. The West is immensely ahead of Russia in industrial potential, and that means in the power of its weapons. Russia, despite all the blustering arrogance of the Communists, takes a very low place on the list of those countries which might catch up with America. If a Russian leader should cross the boundary line between peace and war, he would doubtless destroy a great empire, but it would be his own.

Unfortunately, that optimistic forecast does not exhaust the problem. Should Russia go to war, she would first make good all damage done by the last war, she would certainly have carried

political permeation of her enemies to the highest obtainable degree, and she would also certainly have the atomic bomb and far-distance missiles to hit directly across the ocean. In the meantime, undoubtedly, the Western world would not have lost its present advantages in the race of scientific warfare, and would have developed weapons still more terrible. That would give her victory. But Russia would not go to war without possessing weapons capable of working terrific destruction in the heart of the territory of her enemies. That is the position from which to start any argument about future civilization after an atomic war.

It is exceptional for civilizations to disappear in one crash. It has happened, in the case of the Aztecs, of the Incas, of the Assyrians, though in the last case only after a preliminary period of decline. It is not likely to happen with a structure as big as Western civilization. But at the same time, it would be a gross mistake to expect our civilization to issue from every disaster with renewed vigour. The continent of Europe, the heart of Western civilization, is already in a process of decline so obvious, so penetrating and so rapid, that the most serious doubts about the possibility of full recovery are justified. If the Anglo-Saxon countries receive a similar blow in a future world war, the chances are that they will go the same way, though perhaps not so fast. The disproportion between tasks and means would probably become too large to be overcome. After victory, the Anglo-Saxon countries would find themselves in virtual control of our planet, but their resources, reduced by terrific destruction, would hardly be adequate for shouldering the task. Yet peace could only be preserved by maintaining Anglo-Saxon world paramountcy. Every great war increases the dependence of the ruling classes, whatever their structure, upon the masses. Yet, amidst general destruction, the demands of the masses for a higher standard of living could not be fulfilled, and it is not likely that the normal mechanism of production could be made to work again while these demands remained unfulfilled. The great conflicts in the political field would be resolved, the road to an Augustan age would be open, but, as after the end of the Roman civil wars, there would be few people to enjoy it, the recovery would be largely fictitious, promise and meaning would have gone out of life. The new world empire would rest on universal exhaustion rather than on strength, and, in view of the terrific destruction preceding its

creation, it would presumably be more short-lived than were other world empires.

The flaw in this whole argument is that it is too mechanical, or, if you will, too pragmatic, meaning by 'pragmatic' too much tied to the chain of cause and effect, neglecting the vast basic general trend, which will find its way whatever the details of future history. It might be argued with considerable justification that a healthy civilization always overcomes the worst disasters, as Western civilization overcame the death, within two years, of a third of Europe's population during the 'black death' epidemic in the fourteenth century. Conversely, a declining civilization might fade out even without a major catastrophe, or, more exactly, would find any normal conflict developing into a major catastrophe because it is no longer able to cope with normal problems. It is also possible to point up the links between the evolutionary and the pragmatic point of view. If our Western civilization were still healthy, would it show our present high social tensions? Would it have tolerated, and still tolerate, the repeated challenge by alien totalitarian forces, refusing to strike at them up to the moment of supreme necessity? Is the totalitarian menace really so strong intrinsically? Is it really the case that Germany, under a madman's rule, and Russia with half her population still living in straw-covered huts, were bound to become serious threats to the West? Is it not rather fatigue and inertia in the Western world, reluctance to make sacrifices in time, which has made the challenge so serious? No doubt Churchill was right in calling the war against Hitler the most unnecessary of all wars.

Only against this wider background is there an answer to the query about the future. We may ask ourselves whether it is worth while defending a civilization showing so much intrinsic weakness. But once already in our generation, when the ultimate challenge came, the West proved itself less weak than it appeared to be. Only, in the event of a third world war, the alternative will be different. The real alternative will not, as in the case of the anti-Nazi war, be surrender without a fight or survival through a terrific fight. It will be submission to totalitarian slavery or a war which *must*, inevitably, mark the beginning of a sharp decline of the Western world, even *after* victory has been won. The nature of this specific challenge is not yet clearly realized. As

usual, we are thinking in terms of last time's danger, while, by our goodwill and our retrenchment policy, we busily prepare an entirely different challenge to ourselves. We think in terms of a possible hard struggle to preserve freedom. We should think in terms of a struggle where, indeed, we may preserve freedom, but at the price of remaining maimed for the rest of our existence as a civilization. Only when this true character of the challenge will become apparent will the real temptation to give in arise. Yet, in view of what has happened since 1914, and of what is happening now, I am convinced that the West, if challenged, will take up the challenge and win. This, I do not doubt, will be the decision of the West if the worst happens, whatever the consequences.

But why is a relapse into barbarism, with all the dreadful things it means for the individual and for the community, preferable to enslavement to a totalitarian power? The answer can be found in a comparative analysis of various types of decaying civilization.

As far as I can see, the decay of civilizations invariably takes place along one of two alternative lines of development, two alternative trends which lead to either slavery or barbarism. To some extent, these two types are mutually exclusive.

I can think of no better illustration of my thought than the story of the Struldbrugs in the third book of *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift, as my readers remember, speaks of a race of men enjoying eternal life on this earth, men who are blessed with the exemption from life's most bitter ingredient, from death; men who cannot die, the most happy, nay, the most unhappy of all men. For it would be asking too much of the Creator, so Swift says, to endow them not only with immortality but at the same time with eternal youth. All they achieve is the unbearable dotage of an eternal old age, of bottomless melancholy, of boundless hatred of all life. It is a vision, intended successfully to cure men of the desire to avoid death. It is only a vision—where individuals are concerned. In the case of civilizations it is a reality. We are surrounded by Struldbrug civilizations, and a very unpleasant sight they are.

Amidst the nations of the West, the Jews present the clearest case of such a Struldbrug civilization, and the whole Jewish tragedy really comes down to this fact. The individual members of the Jewish community can perhaps individually, with great difficulty, escape the curse of cultural Struldbrugism, by

intermarriage with Gentiles, by total cultural assimilation, by cutting their ties with their community and blending into their surroundings. But a Jewish community, as long as any exists, will be a *Struldbrug* community.

Swift speaks of the moment when individuals, so far normal, though singled out by a mark on their heads as future *Struldbrugs*, become aware of their *Struldbrug* existence, and cease to be normal men. In the emergence of *Struldbrug* civilizations, there are such moments, too, moments when a civilization stops both growing *and* declining, becomes impermeable to any transformation from within, so as to remain identical to itself, unchanging for all times in its inner structure, changing only as the result of favourable or destructive interference from without. In the Jewish case, which is perhaps slightly more marked and paradigmatic than other similar cases to be mentioned soon, this moment of turning from normal growth and ageing to *Struldbrugism* can be named and dated. It is the year A.D. 69, when the destruction of the Temple appeared inevitable to all except a few maniacs, and when, in view of the inevitable fall, Rabbi Jokhanaan ben Sakkai made his own private peace with the Romans, and in exchange got leave to found the university of Jabne. On the day of the fall of the Holy City, Rabbi Jokhanaan gave his disciples the watch-word that, now that the centre of the cult was destroyed, the 'law' must be the only binding tie of Judaism, and that hence a final, unambiguous fixing of the content of the law was a life-and-death question for the survival of Jewry.

I have experienced few things more tragic than watching young Jews (in internment as 'enemy aliens' during the war) hotly discussing the rights and wrongs of that decision, and of the political lines of the various Jewish parties involved in the rising of A.D. 66-70 as if they discussed the rights and wrongs of Churchill *v.* Chamberlain in 1939-40. The timelessness of that debate, the irrelevance of nearly two thousand years of history intervening between the founding of Jabne University in A.D. 69 and the internment of young Jews as enemy aliens in Britain in A.D. 1940, made a ghastly impression upon me. Yet their attitude was perfectly apposite. For though there have been significant developments in the field of theology, metaphysics and law in the Jewish community since, these developments only led to the expulsion of their standard bearers from the Jewish community.

The community as a whole has since stuck to Jabne lines, and in the sense of real historical time—as distinct from abstract chronological time—the problem of Jabne *v.* Jerusalem—rabbinic religion *v.* Jewish State—was more immediate to these Jews, than the fight of Churchill *v.* Chamberlain, already well outdated by events, could be to any reasonable Englishman during the blitz winter of 1940-41. Admittedly Zionism, as A. J. Toynbee has pointed out, is an attempt to organize Jews as a Western nation and to break with the tradition of a purely rabbinic community. As far as this attempt succeeds, it will inevitably lead away one section of Jewry from their own culture, and, by a more or less clean break with the past, will make them part of the Western world. But this is not inner development, as little as the parliamentary representation of West Indian Negroes is an outcrop of African culture. Any part of Jewry which remains fixed upon its own foundations, rather than going over wholesale to an alien civilization, will remain tied to the Jabne tradition, without change or alteration. As likely as not, in the end, the Zionist movement will split into one section completely adopting Western ways and another one returning to Jabne. At any rate, even if this should not be so, Jewry, for eighteen hundred years, has remained timeless, unchanged and unmovable. That is the exact meaning of cultural Struldburgism.

We have chosen the Jewish case merely because it is obvious to everybody's eyes and can be understood without much reference to historical and anthropological material. But once the basic facts of this case have been pointed out, other similar cases come to mind. There are, in the first place, a number of small cases structurally parallel to the Jewish case to such an extent as to be practically identical. What about those Parsees who, in the beginning of the seventh century A.D., fled before the Arab onslaught and have lived on in India ever since? Their vernacular, but not their sacred idiom transformed—as is the case with the Jews—but not identical with the idiom of the population surrounding them—also as with unassimilated Jews; the parallel could be carried much further. What about those so-called 'Assyrians'; in fact, the last remnant of the once great and mighty Nestorian civilization? What about the Copts, the Armenians, the endless variety of religious and cultural residues complicating the structure of modern Syria, and making it so thoroughly archaic in type?

Our planet is strewn with *Struldbrug* civilizations, with cultures neither growing nor decaying, cultures no longer changing in time, cultures which can only remain what they are or disintegrate and perish under outside pressure—civilizations timeless, invertebrate, ossified.

I do not intend to go into too much detail, important though a discussion of details might be in a different context, for I do not want to go beyond what is necessary to illustrate our present problem. It needs stating, though, that, in contrast to Swift's poetical vision, *Struldbrug* cultures are in reality not absolutes, that, in contrast to Swift's *Struldbrugs*, they can die, if only by outside interference, and also that there are transitional cases. I do not think it is quite impossible, even for civilizations which seem totally ossified, to undergo a transformation and, instead of falling to ashes, to come alive again under the life-giving impact of other, younger civilizations. I believe it is even possible to evolve a casuistry of such possibilities—but here is not the place to do it. Before studying shades, main types must be clearly defined. There exists an opposite type of decline, which is typified by the decline of Rome.

To an amazing extent, Roman civilization did not ossify, and never stopped developing. It is true that this statement is only partly true. The Greek provinces of the Roman Empire did partly ossify into Byzantine civilization. Byzantine civilization is one of those border cases where it is as impossible to speak of complete ossification as of full and complete natural growth. That part of the Empire became finally ossified only in an alien shell, as part of the Turkish Empire. The case is relevant to our own problem, for obviously the ossification of our modern Western civilization within the shell of Russian rule would provide a close parallel. But the Western part of the Roman Empire 'relapsed into barbarism', and, after the 'dark centuries', evolved into another more powerful civilization, pregnant with immensely bigger achievements. It would be easy, again, to point to other historical parallels, which we shall leave aside. One element of the situation working, in this case, for relapse into barbarism rather than *Struldbrugism* was the belatedness of Roman civilization, the fact that Rome only half belonged to the higher civilization of classical antiquity, that its more important growth belonged to the latest phase of that civilisation, that, originally at least, it was

on the fringe of that civilization geographically. The parallel with the position of modern America is striking, and I should not shrink from drawing the obvious inferences about the future.

For the Roman citizen of the fifth century it was no doubt greatly preferable to inhabit Byzance rather than Rome. The Life of Byzance may have been oppressive in many directions, but its citizens enjoyed the benefits of law and order, of learning and manners, of cults and arts proper to a higher civilization. The inhabitants of Rome were helplessly exposed to the murdering, looting and raping of the hosts of Alaric and Genseric, and watched the city falling into ruins and the countryside becoming deserted. But, looking backwards, we can see that the devastated provinces of the Western Empire became the cradle of the most creative civilization mankind has so far produced, whereas Byzance, which never experienced a catastrophe of this kind, not even through Turkish conquest, produced no more than a second-rate aftermath of the grander civilizations which had preceded it. The argument may seem abstract, too abstract. But for this one time I wish to argue the case on the broadest background available, and I see no other background as broad as this one.

Clearly, the case is closely related to the survival of freedom, of independence, and of the West. It is related to freedom, though not in the sense that during the five centuries of the Roman Empire the West would have been less autocratically ruled than the East. As autocracy developed, it took its symbols and methods more and more from the East until, from the time of Diocletian onwards, no difference was left between an oriental kingdom and the Roman Empire. At the same time the West, by way of disintegration, broke loose from autocracy. The Germanic States arising in the West were not autocracies. Though the political rights of the Germanic freeholders declined, feudalism checked the power of the ruler and of the State, and out of feudalism grew the representation of the subject and all modern political liberty. While the West, after a terrific and long-lasting crisis, moved towards liberty, Byzance, maintaining order and civilization, moved deeper and deeper into autocracy.

The moment came when it was no longer important whether this autocracy was exerted by a national dynasty or by foreign conquerors—a moment which must come in the history of every autocracy. By its own choice Byzance preferred the Turk to the

Latin. The loss of freedom within had led to subjection from without. The West, starting from the same roots but developing in the opposite direction, had by that time evolved into a welter of free and independent national units.

And it should not be forgotten, in this context, that the geographical layout then presented an exact parallel to our present geographical situation. As between Hellenes and Persians, as between Western feudalism and Byzance, so today between the Anglo-Saxon powers and Russia it is a question of West *v.* East. This is not incidental. The history starting in Ionia in Homeric times, and leading to modern London and Washington, is a history of growing freedom. The history starting, much earlier, in Sumer and Egypt, and leading through Assyria, Persia, Byzance to Moscow, is a history of lasting and basically unchanging autocracy. The clash remains the same, the controversy over thousands of years remains the same basic, decisive controversy, the red thread of the history of higher civilization. Only the border between West and East has moved to and fro.

Under Alexander the Great the West, which had started so late, moved deep into Asia. Under Diocletian the East had reached Britain. In the later Middle Ages the West extended up to Kiev. Today, Germany, not only politically but also spiritually, is largely a prey to the ways of the East. Also, the geographical centre of the controversy has constantly shifted northwards, both in West and East. But there is no difficulty in recognizing in the antagonists of today the same forces that fought at Salamis in 480 B.C.

We westerners may well take deep comfort in our troubles, with perhaps much worse in store for us, in the thought that while the East has not progressed much since the days of the Assyrian Empire, the West has progressed immensely. It was, in all its phases, a creation of Northern barbarians who had been touched by Eastern influences without submitting to them. At every stage of their development, the Western nations and civilizations were threatened not so much with conquest by the East, but with assimilation to its civilization. The Asiatic wave which nearly engulfed Hellas in the seventh century B.C. was much more dangerous than the ten years between Marathon and Salamis. But it was precisely the reaction against the Eastern permeation which led to the final self-assertion of Hellenic civilization towards

the end of the sixth century and which, apart from all its intrinsic glory, enabled the Hellenes to withstand the onslaught of the hosts of Xerxes. The East reasserted itself against Alexander's conquests. But the East itself could exist only within the shell of the Roman Empire and, when within its borders the civilization of the East became paramount, that involved the escape of the West from the bondage of the East. There is no need to carry the account down into modern times.

The East cannot understand the intrinsic strength of the West. Eastern autocracies always thought it an easy task to conquer the West, and always failed. Today we are confronted with a new onslaught whose peculiarity it is that Russia has borrowed so much of Western technique. But Western technique cannot adequately function in an Eastern context. Clearly, looking at our present woes in so large an historical context, we have every reason to be cheerful—not cheerful for our personal destiny, which is not likely to be pleasant, but cheerful for the destiny of the values on which we live.

But how does all this relate to the respective effects of Struldbrugism and barbarism upon the future of civilizations? There exists an obvious affinity between ossification and autocracy. Effective autocracy excludes genuine development. Yet it would be a great mistake to think in terms of crude, simple alternatives. Eastern civilization, autocracy, ossification, are not one and the same thing. It may be argued that the oldest civilizations of the East had the germs of both autocracy and liberty in them, and that not before Assyrian times had the decision fallen in favour of absolute autocracy. More important, there are many Struldbrug civilizations without political autocracy. The Jews are a classical case.

But there seems to be good reason, nevertheless, to relate these apparent exceptions to autocracy. For they have all happened within the geographical region of the autocracies. Is it not that groups deprived of their secular rulers have instead submitted to the absolute rule of an absolute law? It certainly applies in the case of the Parsees. And in India we can see the political autocracy of Rajas and later of Sultans exist side by side with the absolute tyranny of the caste Dharma. The relation between Sultanism and Moslem law is also a case in point. Political autocracy and unchanging custom really seem to belong together, and to part

company only in case of inescapable necessity. The West never knew either.

Again, admittedly, our Western constant change is nearer to chaos, and that is the objection of the East against us. It is true that there exists as little stringent connexion between chaos and the West as there exists between autocracy and ossification. Absolutes are always wrong in the interpretation of history. But affinity between the West and chaos is not smaller than between the East and rigidity. The East, too, has known chaos, a very great deal of chaos. It happens where autocracy and unchanging custom are sapped from within to the point of collapse. Then, after a longer or shorter transition, there happens a return to the older forms. In the West, we have so far had only one big transition, that from classical to Western civilization. That one transition seems to prove that the West is incapable of real rigidity without leaning upon Eastern models and forces. The law of the West, so far, has been to develop, to grow, and to disintegrate when growth is no longer possible. In the East, the periods of chaos are short lived; rigidity predominates. In the West, autocracies are short lived, and mainly borrowed from the East. Prediction is, of course, dangerously difficult. But, so far, everything seems to point to the conclusion that we have again, for the second time in Western history, reached one of the great turning-points. The tendencies towards autocracy, rigidity and Struldburgism are flowing strong again, but the forces of resistance will again be stronger.

It is a sad and tragic thought that the victory of these forces of resistance may involve, not, as we all wish, further growth, but simply disintegration. As I have tried to show, disintegration is the only possible prelude to further growth. The interlude may well last for centuries and be gruesome. But it is the only road leading further on towards the intrinsic goals of human development.

The lure of submitting to a world autocracy with its prospects of order, security and avoidance of disaster, is only the temptation to sell the right of the first-born for a dish of lentils. It is more than doubtful whether Western civilization can continue in its present shape. In all probability we are at the beginning of a transition, long, painful and uncertain, to another civilization. This is not a matter for our choice. But it would be our choice to submit to a world autocracy and, thereby, to cast away the

possibility of further human development. Whether the challenge will materialize we cannot know now, but we shall know within a decade or two. If the challenge materializes, we shall be able to fight it and to ward it off—if we have the right spirit. Whole nations cannot be sustained in such a struggle by far-flung hypotheses about history past and future. But those inclined who ask for ultimate justification of their actions should know that they cannot undertake that struggle in an optimistic belief in linear progress.

The course of the struggle itself would belie their optimism; they would collapse under disillusion. If the struggle comes, the hardest, most bitter, most pessimistic assumptions are in place about the future in store for us. And yet, not since Salamis, and not since the days when Charles Martel defeated the Arabs at Tours, was there a struggle so full of meaning. For such is the paradox of human affairs that men, by walking with open eyes towards the disintegration of their own civilization, may yet serve and experience the fullness of life, whereas those shrinking from the catastrophe may work for ultimate death, and experience it in their own souls. In times such as these there is only one upright attitude: *Amor fati*.

HERBERT READ

THE FATE OF MODERN PAINTING

‘I WRITE poems for poets and satires or grotesques for wits. . . . For people in general I write prose and am content that they should be unaware that I do anything else.’ This opinion, expressed by Robert Graves in a foreword to *Poems 1938-1945*, is one which most poets will be found to share; and even if they have not dared to express themselves so frankly, their activities suit Mr. Graves’s words. Their work has no appeal to people in general, and never could have had such appeal.

Painters, for reasons which can perhaps be explained historically, but which are not logical, still maintain a different belief, and a

vast organization of exhibitionism, salesmanship and propaganda has been built up to support their belief. But I see no *civic* difference between the poet and the painter: each is an individual giving expression to a personal vision which may or may not be of great social importance, but in one case society can ignore the creative gift with impunity, in the other case it is now to be bullied into accepting it and paying for it out of public revenue.

If we go back four hundred years, there is no difference in the treatment meted out to any type of artist. The painter, the poet, the musician or the architect, may have had a patron—another individual blessed with wealth and power—or he may not have had a patron; but all were treated alike, according to the patron's estimate of their merits.

The economic structure of society has changed, and during the past three centuries, and latterly at a devastating speed, the basis of patronage, which in its final form was the private fortune, has been undermined. As a consequence of two world wars, and of the gradual conversion of most societies to some form of socialism, incomes have been equalized and wealth, of an order which permits largess, has been whittled away.

The poet has long since accommodated himself to this new situation. He usually takes a job in a bank or a publisher's office, and writes his poetry in the bus, or at week-ends. Or he may give up poetry for some more popular form of literary entertainment—that is to say, he commercializes his talent, becomes a copy-writer for the advertising agent, or a script writer for Hollywood. But then he is no longer a poet in any serious meaning of the word.

The painter has never accepted the new situation. He has made various attempts to adapt his craft. Hogarth, for example, hit upon the idea of making prints of his paintings and selling them at a popular price to a large public. But photography and other techniques of reproduction took the profits out of that practice, and today the engraver or etcher is just as clamorous as the painter for some form of patronage.

Now that the private patron is threatened with final liquidation, painters demand that the State should become their patron. It is not only the painters who make this demand, but a whole host of interested critics, art historians, sociologists, politicians and priests. Their claims are formulated without any qualms of modesty in the report on *The Visual Arts* sponsored by the

Dartington Hall Trustees.¹ 'It is essential', we are told, 'for the well-being of painting and sculpture in this country that Government patronage of living art in all its forms should be continued and extended. It is necessary that private patronage should be encouraged, and that in local galleries and by travelling exhibitions the public should be able to enjoy and buy contemporary art. The Government should also support painters and sculptors by buying their work for the national collections and by commissioning them for specific purposes. The Government should either commission artists to decorate public buildings, or introduce legislation on the lines of that in Sweden and some other countries, where a percentage of the total building cost of all public buildings is required to be spent on their decoration by artists. Assistance should be especially directed to tide promising young painters and sculptors over the difficult years between leaving college and establishing themselves. It is useless to consider a larger place for art in the life of the nation without first securing the livelihood of the artist.'

There are many other such arguments in the Report of this Arts Inquiry. It is true that there is an underlying intention to keep private patronage alive, but the economic facts presented in this same Report merely serve to make clear the futility of such an intention. Works of art can only be bought with painful sacrifice on the part of individuals, and even these few willing buyers are not sufficient in number to support the thousands of people who choose to become painters and sculptors. The writers of the Report realize this clearly enough, and they have no hesitation in suggesting that the State should become the universal patron.

There are several aspects of the question which are not considered in this Report, nor in general by advocates of State patronage. In this paper I would like to examine three of them:

- I. The actual process of State patronage—who in effect is the patron and by what machinery is choice exercised?
- II. The material consequences of State patronage—what becomes of the works of art purchased by the State and what is their actual effect on the public?
- III. The effect of State patronage on the artist, and eventually on the quality of the art produced?

¹ Published by the Oxford University Press, 1946. 10s. 6d.

A critical examination of State patronage under these heads might lead us towards some general principles which imply quite a different solution of the problem.

In the first place, let us ask who actually is the patron in State patronage. The State is often rightly described as a machine: its total effect is inhuman. But the cogs in the machine are nevertheless human beings—perhaps not *ordinary* human beings, for in the first place they were selected as possessing special qualifications, and a few years' service as a cog may have had some effect on their characters: a well-worn cog has polished teeth. But ministries of education, museums and art galleries, advisory councils and selection committees, are composed of administrative officers, executive officers and clerks. Patronage, that is to say, the selection of artists to work for the State and of works of art to be bought by the State, would presumably be exercised by officers of the administrative grade, with perhaps the assistance of advisory committees. The administrators—even if museum or gallery officials—will not necessarily be men of sensibility or taste: they have been appointed for their presumed efficiency in administration. But even supposing that they are men of taste, and are advised by men of taste, whose taste shall they represent when it comes, say, to the purchase of a painting or the giving of a commission? Let us remember that we are not concerned with the art of the past, where a certain consensus of opinion can guide the administrator. A decision has to be made which is, or should be, the direct exercise of a native sensibility.

But will it be? Will it not rather depend on the prejudices and casual knowledge of the individual in question—whom he has met, what he has read, what he thinks will please the Press? If it is a committee which is to exercise the choice, the situation can only be worse. I have served on many such committees, and in my experience only one of three things can happen:

1. something is chosen which offends nobody, because its virtues are negative;
2. a little bit of everything is chosen to please everybody;
3. the committee agrees to be realistic and to allow one member to make the choice for all of them: the committee, that is to say, resigns its functions in despair.

The first two possibilities, for instance, merely lead to compromises: they do not imply intelligent patronage and can hardly

be said to encourage the best in art. The third possibility is equivalent to the administrator's own choice, and the State is really paying for the indulgence of one man's taste, to which it then proceeds to give the sanction of its anonymous authority.

But administrators change, committees change. A patron of old was at least consistent, even dictatorial. The State as a patron is fickle, and in a very short time a collection of modern works of art accumulated by a government or a municipality is distinguished by its incoherence and dimness.¹

Proposals have been made for improving the administration of art services—for consolidating the national and provincial museums, for recruiting staff on a more intelligent plan, for establishing art centres which will act as agents of education and propaganda, bringing the public into contact with the State's purchases, inducing them to appreciate the administrator's taste. Such measures would introduce order where there is at present almost complete chaos, but they would only intensify the indecisiveness of the patronage to be exercised by such an efficient machine.

Now let us consider the physical aspect of the problem. The products of State patronage can be disposed of in two ways. If they are *objets d'art*, easel paintings and pieces of sculpture, they can be accumulated and housed in galleries and museums. No limit is set to such official collecting. The national collections in London already comprise hundreds of thousands of objects, but most of these are antiques. We are, presumably, to collect and house hundreds of thousands of novelties. What we don't house in the capital we shall distribute to provincial cities and towns, even to village colleges and women's institutes. A hundred years ago a humble workman could buy a Staffordshire pottery figure and put it on his mantelpiece. He can no longer buy Staffordshire figures, or anything like them; but the State will buy a picture for him and hang it in the local art centre.

The second way in which the State can patronize art is to use it in its own buildings. It can have painters to paint murals in the post offices; it can put mosaics in railway stations and stained glass

¹ 'Les fruits les plus accomplis du pompiérisme académique'—the Paris newspaper *Combat* on an exhibition of modern British paintings from the Tate Gallery (19 June 1946).

in town halls. I see no objection to such a policy, except the one already mentioned: the choice has to be made by an official or a committee. Such results as we see around us already merely reflect the indecisiveness which is bound to be the result of official selection. They are eclectic, inconsistent, incoherent: they cannot be otherwise because there is no common tradition, no prevailing sense of style. Without a tradition to guide them and the infallibility of a sense of style, the guardians of public taste can only express their own separateness, their individual tastes and whimsies. If they wish to be popular, their choice will be vulgar; if they have any inclination of their own to follow, it will inevitably be esoteric, 'highbrow'.

Now let us assume that the State has had a run for its money—a run of a century, shall we say, which is not a long period in the history of art. What, at the end of such a period, will be the position? Museums and art galleries will have proliferated—every city will have several, and no town but will have its art centre. We may restrict the size of the units, but that will only increase their number. Facilities of travel will meanwhile have developed enormously, and there will be no reason why every citizen should not see every museum in his own country, and as many as he likes abroad.

But will he want to? I have seen hundreds of museums, from Aberdeen to Ravenna, from Stockholm to Chicago. I began my pilgrimage, some thirty years ago, eager, inquisitive, thrilled. But now I am *sated*. I am not a *Kunstforscher*, an art detective, keen to expose some false attribution, hopeful to find some unrecognized work of a fifth-rate follower of a minor master (the rest have all been catalogued and tabulated beyond criticism). I am an *amateur*—a lover of art. But such love does not thrive on excess of indulgence: quite the contrary: we must, as the Chinese and the Japanese have long recognized, ration our aesthetic sensations. There are museums enough already to satisfy a normal need, and these museums are full enough, many of them too full. But a museum of *modern* art, it will be said, may exhibit some new thrill, touch some hitherto unexercised chord of sensation. Yes; one painting in a thousand may do this, but the thrill is not worth the trail. There are a thousand easier and better ways of attending the muses. Clough's revised commandment applies with devastating effect to works of art:

Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officially to keep alive.

If it is objected that I am adopting a blasé attitude in this matter, applying the sentiments of a roué of the arts to material intended for the common man, the ordinary citizen of a paternal State, then I must ask for a consideration of the psychological facts. Suppose by propaganda and other inducements we have persuaded this common man to pursue the pilgrimage of art, to expose himself to the impact of a civil patronage exercised on his behalf by his anonymous mentors—what then? When we visit some national or municipal art gallery and observe the people about us—those dim, bored figures gingerly skating over waxed floors, drifting like chilled bees from one fading flower to another—can we believe that anything important is happening to them? ‘How the diabolic Whistler’, wrote Timothy Shy at the time, ‘would have enjoyed the reopening of the Tate, photographs of which showed three citizens indomitably tackling the pictures and six more reclining hopelessly on a settee, already dazed, sewn up, exhausted, and knocked out by British Art. We never forget a Voice from the Middle West heard in the Uffizi at Florence. “All this darned Art,” it wailed, “it just makes your feet hot.”’ In a rare case, one in ten thousand, a dormant sensibility may be awakened. But unless that common man is by present standards very uncommon, the mere fact that he is a man, and has therefore undergone the normal processes of education and social integration, means that he is already deaf to any appeal that the work of art might have for him. His aesthetic sensibility has been killed at school, probably before the age of twelve. It cannot now be revivified, except by some treatment equivalent to psycho-analysis. Do not let us deceive ourselves: the common man, such as we produce in our civilization, is aesthetically a dead man. He may cultivate art as a ‘culture’, as a passport to more exclusive circles of society. He may acquire the patter of appreciation, the accent of understanding. But he is not moved: he does not love: he is not *changed* by his experience. He will not alter his way of life—he will not go out from the art gallery and cast away his ugly possessions, pull down his ugly house, storm the Bastilles where beauty lies imprisoned. He has more *sense*, as we say.

Finally, let us consider the effects of State patronage on the

artists. Again, a complicated psychological problem of which only the outlines can be indicated.

First, there is the question of what one might call the scope of art—the aim or intention which is present, perhaps only half-consciously, in the mind of the artist. For a private patron, the artist used to paint with a definite notion of what was expected of him—he knew that the painting would be hung in a living-room, that it would be lived with, that it would have to please a specific 'taste'. But the painter who aims at State patronage—with what preconceptions shall he paint? The picture will be hung in some bleak or pompous gallery—he cannot be sure where it will be hung: it must please the taste of some obscure or unknown official before it is offered to the appreciation of a wandering, indifferent public. Not exactly an inspiring prospect for the painter. In some cases, it will mean the abuse of the artist's talent: for example, if he is essentially a miniaturist, he will force himself to paint on a monumental scale. But assuming he can accommodate himself to the scale and environment of a public gallery, the painter must then consider his anonymous patron. The State with us is not yet a political instrument; where it is the painter must consider the ideology and prejudices of the party in power. But even where the State is still politically neutral in its administration, the painter has still to consider the aims and ideals of the bureaucracy. Again, it is the indefiniteness, the imprecision of the process that is baffling, that fails to inspire. When a painter painted for the Catholic Church, or for the Court of a king, he had a fairly exact idea of what was expected of him: he was faced by a definite task—to paint an altarpiece for a particular position in a particular church. But how shall a contemporary painter set about painting a picture to be bought by the Arts Council and circulated round a thousand art centres?

Let me now suggest another way of looking at the whole problem. Let me return to my starting point, and paraphrase Robert Graves's statement. *Pictures should be painted for painters. For people in general artists should design useful things and be content if the public is unaware that they do anything else.*

Mr. Graves would probably admit that within the term 'poets' should be included putative poets—mute inglorious Miltos who have a mental poetic activity. In the same way my paraphrase

would include putative painters—people who have retained their aesthetic sensibility, are consciously aware of a desire to exercise it, but have never had the chance. With that qualification, the statement will stand as an indication of my way of looking at the problem.

The whole business of what is called 'cabinet' painting—painting little rectangles of canvas or board to be hung in private living-rooms, is a relatively recent development in the history of art. It corresponds very closely with the rise of capitalism and was called into being by the acquisitive society, by the bourgeoisie which wanted to invest some of its wealth in *objets d'art*, in relatively small works of art which could be moved from one house to another, and which in case of financial need could easily be disposed of piecemeal.

Before the sixteenth century painters were craftsmen. Generally speaking, they were not exclusively painters. They had workshops which would turn out any job of interior decoration, and the jobs were usually handed out to them by the Church, sometimes by the city council, sometimes by a prince. But it was always commissioned work, and it was always work with a specific function. The orders which the Church gave to the glass-painter—an obscure corner of the history of art of which I used to have some expert knowledge—were as detailed as a modern contract for building a factory. All the great medieval painters, and Renaissance painters right down to the time of Michelangelo, were craftsmen carrying out formal contracts.

Then, as time went on, the painter and the sculptor were left to their own devices, to express, as we say, their own personalities. There were still specific jobs to be done—portraits to be painted, for example—but in general the artist began to invent free subjects—still lifes, landscapes, *genre* subjects, finally what we call abstractions. A medieval patron would have been quite incapable of understanding why he should pay good gold for a functionless construction of circles and squares. If such a proposal had come within his comprehension, he would have been outraged: he would probably have ordered the insolent painter to be executed.

I am not suggesting that no great works of art were produced in the epoch of cabinet painting. From Giorgione to Picasso a host of exquisite creations, the expression of a great artist's subtle vision and faultless technique, were produced for the capitalist

market, for the private delectation of merchant princes and rampageous tyrants, for men of taste who also happened to be men of wealth. But the whole basis of that kind of production has gone. The merchant prince is now the controller in some Government department, with a fat salary but so heavily taxed that he has no money left to indulge in any but the most modest patronage: the tyrants have been tamed and the man of taste has been impoverished. Admittedly, here and there a private fortune is still large enough to leave a margin for indulgence—but it is a shrinking margin. Only in America does private patronage survive on a considerable scale. We must also, at this point, take into consideration the influence of modern developments in architecture, which leave little room for the hanging of pictures in a house or flat. Contemporary sensibility prefers unencumbered surfaces, unbroken lines, and a maximum of light. I know modern painters who live in modern houses where they do not exhibit even their own paintings. The studio is a place apart, a workshop where objects are made for people who still live in bourgeois houses, or (hopefully) for the State's art galleries.

In short, the cabinet picture has lost, or is quickly losing, all economic and social justification, and to try and keep it alive by State patronage is like trying to keep the dodo alive in a zoo. Indeed, there is more than a fanciful parallel between the museum and the zoo; they are both places where we keep rare and eccentric specimens at public expense. And why not, to be logical, put the artist himself in the zoo: let him have a comfortable cage with a northern light, and there let him produce obsolete art objects to be hung in an aquarium-like building next door.

Cabinet painting is a defunct art, perpetuated by defunct institutions. I do not know what proportion of the sixty thousand students attending art schools in Great Britain any one year are taught easel painting: it is certainly a large proportion, and even if it is a small proportion, easel painting has nevertheless a prestige and a status in art education which is part of the defunct tradition of capitalistic art. The Royal Academy exists to perpetuate this tradition, and a whole system of academic education is geared up to its obsolete standards. No harm would be done to art, in any vital sense of the word, if all this vast machinery of life-classes and antique classes were abolished. The Royal Academy Schools, the Royal College of Art, the Slade School, and many local art

schools, are not only perpetuating a defunct tradition: they are luring thousands of young men and women into an obsolete vocation where they can only experience poverty, disillusion, and despair. From this point of view, they are criminal institutions and ought to be abolished forthwith.

And what shall we put in the place of our futile art schools? There is no simple answer to that question, because what is really involved is a complete social reorientation towards art. I advocate a reform of education which puts art where it should always have been—right in the heart of things. Let us begin with the primary schools. If we can reform our methods of teaching and our attitude towards the objectives of education so that some native aesthetic sensibility is preserved in children, and children are no longer brutalized and anaesthetized by the bludgeoning process of 'learning'—that is to say, hammering conceptual knowledge into their innocent minds—then there would be some human material to work with. You can't make the silk purses of art out of the sow's ears of school certificates. You can't expect the flowering of the creative instinct in an epoch which condemns its children to a *via dolorosa* of examinations.

If we get the foundation right, if we produce children who are healthy, sensitive and wise, rather than children who are brawny, 'clever'¹ and efficient, we can then train them in the techniques of production. Then we can safely teach them how to use tools and machines, because with sensitive fingers and vivid minds they will be incapable of producing or consuming the hideous things they are content with now. Some of them we can teach to be specialists in design—to be industrial designers and architects. To others we can give commissions to work, commissions as specific and detailed as those the medieval artist received. And then, in good time, an art as great as medieval art will take shape.

As for painting easel pictures—well, why not if you, a useful citizen, feel so inclined? You will have your own time in which to paint, just as the poet has his own time for writing verses. You can give your pictures as tokens of regard to your friends, or you can make a little pocket-money by this private hobby. You might paint a great picture in your spare time, just as T. S. Eliot wrote a

¹ Clever etymologically means something with sharp claws (hence, 'clever as a cat'), and that, of course, is the predatory concept of education which we have evolved under the influence of a competitive economy.

great poem in his spare time. But you will not any longer, if you are a reasonable person, expect your fellow-taxpayers to support you while you indulge in an activity which no longer has any economic sanction.

If these facts, and my deductions, are admitted, we should then consider whether any useful purpose can be served by the various institutions and organizations which have already been brought into existence. In other words, can we redirect the policy and practices of our museums and schools of art, our ministries of art and education, our art councils and international committees—even UNESCO itself, can we so reorientate the activities of these bodies that they serve art in a creative, and not merely, conservative fashion?

There is, admittedly, no direct solution of cultural problems. Let me reaffirm once again the *radical* nature of cultural growths. Art is an organic phenomenon, a biological process. Like flowers and fruit, plumage and song, it is a product of the life-force itself. I am not trying to reduce art to materialistic factors. I am prepared to admit that human life has a qualitative distinction, a certain spirituality or higher consciousness, which transcends but does not separate it from the rest of animal creation; and by reason of this evolutionary variation, man's art has perhaps a deeper, at any rate a different, biological significance, compared with the song of the nightingale or the plumage of the peacock. But, nevertheless, all these phenomena are within the same scale of creative evolution. Art is human, not divine: profane, not sacred. It does not descend in pentecostal flames: it arises, like a green sap; like a seminal fluid, it issues from the body, and from the body in an unusual state of excitement. This is true whether we are literal, and think of the body of the individual artist; or metaphorical, and think of the body of society. Now though we are quite clear about the psychology of artistic creation in the individual, and even our classicists admit that art is a physical *afflatus* of some kind, we have never given much consideration to the psychology of artistic creation in a society. We sometimes speak of 'an inspired age', or 'a creative epoch', but then we are only speaking metaphorically. But the facts correspond to the figure of speech: eras, no less than artists, have their *afflatus*, and a society can be inspired. And that is the problem we should study—the relations between the forms of society and the forms

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of art, the interflow of vitality from organizations to individuals, the generation of creative activity in the group, between persons and associations. When we have considered those problems in all their aspects—climatic, ethnic, economic, social—then, perhaps, we shall be in a position to give direct support and encouragement to the arts.

Our present activities are futile. We take what exists—the detritus of a defunct civilization—and we assume that by sifting it, cementing it, mixing it with bureaucratic gold or circulating it in unusual channels, we can re-create a past glory, build the foundations of a new civilization. All we can create in that way is an *ersatz* culture, the synthetic product of those factories we call variously universities, colleges or museums. The universities never have produced an art, and never will. All our technical colleges and public schools, even our primary schools and infant schools, are all so many slaughter-houses, institutions for anaesthetizing the artist, for eradicating sensibility, for repeating endlessly and without variation the stamp of a civilization without art.

We must begin again, modestly, patiently. From our historians we must expect a more exact analysis of the social conditions which have produced art in the past. From our psychologists we must expect a more exact analysis of the creative process in man, not merely in the individual artist, but as a process occurring between man and man, for art is not only creation, but also communication. And from our educationalists we must expect a remodelling of the educational system which will preserve and refine man's innate sensibility, to the end that the practical activities of life are no longer clumsy and inept, abortive or destructive; but by securing a perfect equilibrium of the sensuous and intellectual faculties, ensure the first requisite of a creative age.

ANGUS WILSON

MOTHER'S SENSE OF FUN

DONALD had awoken at six to hear those sounds of bustle and activity that he knew so well—quick scurryings that sounded like mice in the wainscoting, and hushed, penetrating whispers to Cook. There could be no doubt that his mother was up and about and that she intended to be particularly considerate to him after his journey. Over-long intimacy had invested each sound that she made with a particular significance, so that he soon recognized in the youthful jauntiness of her movements a pleasure in his return that went beyond her usual pride in being up so early. She was being especially thoughtful so that he could have no cause for complaint, was laying up indulgence for herself, acquiring merit so that any independence he might claim would appear as ingratitude. No martyr could walk so bravely to her doom as she to the stake she had built for herself.

Why should these household noises have such an accusing ring? He knew there were no duties that could not be performed later in the day, yet it seemed impossible to believe that in carrying them out so quietly his mother was not having to skimp them or expend extra energy upon them—and all this sacrifice, of course, was for him.

I am not equal to the fight, he thought bitterly. 'The contest between Mrs. Carrington and her son for the prize of the latter's independence was an unsatisfactory one to the spectators, for the fight was very unequal. Mrs. Carrington, though a veteran in the ring, showed her old undiminished energy, whilst her punch seemed to have lost nothing of its force. Her speed and tactics were completely superior to those of her opponent, who seemed dazed and tired from the start. She sprang from one corner of the ring to another, seeming to be everywhere at once, and dealing blows from the most unexpected angles.' It was all so intensely unfair, he reflected; she had so many virtues and it was exactly those virtues which made life with her impossible. The crowd, too, was so often on her side, so often succumbed to her charm, all but his own few friends, those that she had not appropriated, and they, of course, were 'impossible' people. 'What a wonderful

pal your mother must be,' people would say to him, 'so easy-going and alive, and such a terrific sense of fun.' It was, of course, absolutely true. At times she moved and even looked like a young girl, and she could then be a delightful companion, ready to go anywhere at any moment, and investing the most ordinary events with a sense of adventure. Despite her continuous anxieties and frets about household matters, she was ready to leave them aside at a moment's notice if she could share for a minute in his life. 'I'm the mistress of the house,' she would say, 'not the house of me.' Since she rose at six and never retired before midnight, she had, as she claimed, plenty of time to get things done. It was the other members of the household who suffered. Looking back, Donald realized that he could not remember leaving a theatre or an evening party without the sick apprehension that he would have to pass an hour or more before he was allowed to sink exhausted into bed. She always had a letter to write on which he could advise, or something to finish off in the kitchen if he wouldn't mind giving a hand, or, in default of other employment, she could bustle about making a last cup of tea, which she would then bring to his bedside. 'I really think this is my favourite moment of the day,' she would say, sinking into the armchair, 'when we can both relax at last. What an extraordinary hat Olga had on. . . .' It was, of course, a nice Bohemian refusal to be dominated by routine, but it meant that they were both always a little overtired, always a little on edge.

As if to emphasize the underlying tension of his life at home, Mrs. Carrington's voice came floating towards him from the room outside, its cheerful metallic timbre striking a chill in him even as he lay in bed. 'Nonsense, Cook,' she was saying, 'you know very well you like standing in these queues. You take to them like a duck to water; they're just up your street.' It was almost obscene, he decided, that one's mother should be so like a hospital nurse. It was difficult to decide which of her two voices more completely suggested the private ward. The sweet cooing which she used in moments of intimacy roused greater suspicion in him, for it called so openly for surrender. But his hostility was chiefly reserved for the high-pitched jollity of her everyday speech, which, apart from being more aurally revolting, revealed her insensitive and bullying nature. All day long it seemed to shrill about the house in a constant stream of self-satisfied humour.

and obtuse common sense. The words she employed, too, were surely specially designed to rob the English language of any pretensions to beauty it might possess. It was not exactly that she used outmoded slang like Miss Rutherford, who was always 'unable to care less' about things or to 'like them more', or even the earlier slang of Aunt Nora with her 'top-holes' and 'purple limits'. He had often thought that to find his mother's phrases one would have to go to English translations of opera or the French and German prose books that he had used at school. It always 'rained cats and dogs', that is, if the rain did not 'look like holding off'; Alice Stockfield 'was a bit down in the mouth', but then she 'let things get on top of her'; Roger Grant was 'certainly no Adonis', but she had 'an awfully soft spot in her heart for him'. At the end of a tiring day he would often wait for one of these familiar phrases in an agony of apprehension that he feared to betray, for he knew that criticism would be met by wounded silence or the slow, crushing steamroller of her banter, the terrible levelling force of her sense of humour. She and Cook were having a 'good old laugh' at that very moment. 'Well, I suppose we must have looked rather silly, ma'am,' he could hear Cook saying. 'Of course we did,' his mother replied. 'You standing there with flour all over your face and me in that terrible old green dress, and in front of us on the floor—a pudding. Didn't you notice his face? I've no doubt at all that when he got home to dinner that night at Surbiton, or wherever Inspectors of Taxes live, he told his wife that he'd seen a couple of lunatics—and of course we *are* completely crazy in this household.'

The same cosy, family jokes, he thought, the same satisfaction with her own little world. The difficulty was that in attacking her in this way one felt so grossly unfair. If she had been some one else's mother one would have felt differently. She had an eye for the ridiculous that was all-penetrating, and, in a great degree, that rarer quality, a sense of fun, so that he seldom went anywhere with her without having, what she so delighted in, 'a good laugh'. 'That rare gift in a woman,' Major Ashley had called it, 'the ability to laugh at herself.' And it was quite true—on occasion she would even mock the very jargon in her speech which he criticized: 'So I said to him in my bright, jolly way,' she would say. But the self-satisfaction with which she laughed at herself, thought Donald bitterly! There was never any real self-criticism in her

humour. No, the criticism was reserved for everything else—the ideas she could not understand, the beauty she could not see, the feelings she could not appreciate. 'Heaven preserve me from the laugh of a really good woman,' he said aloud.

As if to mock his mood the laughter and conversation outside his room grew louder. It was clear that the period of respite granted to him was approaching its end. Soon she would fill the room with that proud sense of possession of which her early morning embrace was almost a symbol. As he looked round the bedroom he realized how much he hated it. The careful, dead good taste of its furnishing bore the imprint of her withering hand. Yet how much she delighted in emphasizing that it was *his* room—'Donald's part of the world'. She would be longing to emphasize his return to it, waiting for him to say how happy he was to be back there—well, she would have to say it for him. Nothing nauseated him more than this pretence that he enjoyed a separate establishment. It was a primary article of the household creed which she reiterated every day that 'civilized people could not live on top of each other', 'everyone must have his own little place where he could do what he liked'. As long as he could remember she had fostered the belief in him that his room was his private domain, only, it would seem, to create stress by her constant invasion of it. The very fiction of independence itself had been used as a weapon against him, when as a boy he had resisted her claims—'Remember, Donald,' she had declared, 'I'm only a visitor here and visitors should be treated with some semblance of good manners'.

At times he fancied the room as a battlefield littered with the skulls and skeletons of his past hopes. It brought before him a series of ever more dispiriting pictures—sick beds surrounded by cloying and fussy affection; nursery teas when his every private fantasy and ambition had been taken out, laughed at and put away with the nonsense knocked out of it; adolescent hours of study and dreams riddled through and through with nagging and banter and summonses to petty errands: over twenty years, now, of nauseating futility. Over these years there had grown up between him and his mother a thickly woven web of companionship and antipathy, and beneath that an inner web of love and hatred. As time passed the antipathy and hatred had grown paramount, as she gradually coiled round his life, breaking his

moral fibre, softening and pulping so that at the last she could swallow him. 'The Nightmare Life in Death is she', he quoted, 'that thickens man's blood with cold.'

The kiss with which his mother greeted him as she brought in the breakfast tray was brisk and businesslike, the sting lay in the gesture with which she followed it—the stroking and rumpling of his hair. The same routine had persisted since his thirteenth year; he could almost hear her say the words he had known so well in his schooldays: 'We're a bit too old for kisses now, aren't we, darling? But we're still mummy's boy.' This morning he could see that she was hungry for some demonstration of the affection she had missed during his six months' absence; well, as far as he was concerned it should be a struggle *à l'outrance*.

'I hope you're quite rested, darling,' said Mrs. Carrington, 'because you'll have to nerve yourself for a heart-to-heart with Cook. Only wild horses or a fond mother's love could have prevented her from waking you up hours ago.' Donald made no answer, but lay back with his head on the pillow and his eyes closed: he was determined to show no sign of appreciation, determined to express no pleasure at being home once more. He watched his mother as she moved quietly but briskly about, settling his clothes and books with the businesslike reverence of a modern Martha. A ray of sunshine from the window picked out her neat grey shingled head—she had always refused to succumb to the more fashionable bleached hair, for she felt that white gave such a hard line to the face—outlined the bright, birdlike features with their pastel colouring of powder and faint rouge upon the cheeks—lipstick was all right for young girls, she would say, but not for old women like her. She looked like a robin, he decided, that had come in for warmth from the Christmas card snow scene outside as she hopped from object to object, folding her son's ties, rearranging the Christmas roses in the pewter mug on the mantelpiece; her bright quizzical eyes and her jolly little smile, her well-cut grey woollen costume and her crimson silk blouse all helped to enhance the picture. 'Look,' she seemed to say, 'I'm really rather wonderful for fifty-eight, so cheerful, almost "cheeky"'; of course, life hasn't been easy and it's taken a lot of pluck to keep going', and then, if you liked robins on Christmas cards you would be filled with the requisite warmth towards her, would surrender to the appeal for protection and make a place for her by your fireside.

And if you did, he thought, you would be lost. No, it was on quite other things that you must concentrate if you were to save your soul alive. The brave, humorous little smile was there, but the underlip stuck out in a discontented babyish pout, the blue eyes shone brightly, but they shone with the hard light of egotism; above all the lines that ran down from her cheeks were lines of self-pity. It was true that he had left the liner at Southampton yesterday with mixed feelings, but he had not guessed how soon the old misery would descend upon him. It had only taken one evening in her company to realize what 'home' and 'mother' meant to him; shades of the prison house had indeed begun to fall upon the growing boy, and the horror of it was, he reflected, that it was not even as if he was a growing boy: he was twenty-five, an old 'lag'. The six months' lecture tour in America had been his first escape since University days. When he was over there it had seemed as though he was free at last, but, of course, he had really only been a ticket-of-leave man. America, in any case, was a thing of the past—that she had made clear to him in their conversation of the night before. 'Well,' she had said with half-humorous patronage, 'they seem to be very much like other foreigners. Perfectly easy to get on with, so long as you remember that you are dealing with children. They don't sound as sensible as the French, but at any rate they're not so pompous as the Germans. Quite frankly, I'm afraid the trouble with them is that they're all really rather common.' It wasn't a period of his life she had shared in, and the sooner it was forgotten the better. She had not done with the subject, he noticed, as he tried not to hear the comments she made whilst tidying his clothes.

'I hope you like the Christmas roses; I had almost to sell the family diamonds to buy them, but there, I'm forgetting they're probably two-a-penny in New York.' 'You don't imagine you're going to *wear* this terrible American tie, do you, darling? Unless you intend to take me to a guest night at the Ancient Order of Buffaloes. Somehow I don't think we'd fit in very well.' 'Gracious! how old-fashioned they must be over there, all those naked girls on magazine covers! Why it's just the sort of thing your great Uncle Tom used to hide in the desk in the billiard room.' God! why must she protract the agony like this? thought Donald. If she wanted to remove his self-reliance from him, let her wheel him into the operating theatre and get it over with;

let him at least be spared this bright sick-room talk, these preliminary flashes of the surgeon's scalpel. At last Mrs. Carrington herself grew impatient of skirmishing—'Your room hasn't changed much, darling, has it?' she asked in a voice yearning for affection. 'The room hasn't changed at all,' he answered flatly, and as he said it he was sucked down by tiredness at the truth of the statement. Nothing had changed: all the illusions he had built up in his absence, all his beliefs in new powers of defence faded before the persistence of her attack. He could see before him the outline of the coming week—the week of holiday before returning to the office on which he had counted so much as a preparation for a new life of independence. There would be successes for her when boring relatives came to the house, when they visited Aunt Nora at Richmond, or when she showed off his tricks before friends she had made in his absence; there would be Pyrrhic victories for him when *his* friends came to the house and she gently but humorously put them out of their ease; there would be truces when he shopped with her at Harrods, lunched with her at her club, or accompanied her to the family solicitor; there would undoubtedly be at least one major conflict with loss of temper and tears and sulking; and, at last, he would return to work, broken in, and trained to carry on life at home.

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Some weeks later Donald lay back in bed, luxuriating in the pleasure of a sleep already closing upon him at the early hour of half-past ten. How strangely exact his forecast of that week had been, save for one major event! Yes, he thought, one must still call it a major event, though perhaps in a few months, or even weeks, it would no longer be 'major', for one must recognize the strange tricks of human memory and affection—not that he would have called himself cynical, only that time had taught him to be a realist. Yes, it had been a most typical week, almost a symbol of his whole relationship with his mother.

First there had been the meeting with Alec. How she must have resented his imposing Alec upon her in that first week at home. How typical of his own subservience, he reflected bitterly, that he had told her of meeting his friend at all. There were certain of his friends of whom she had never approved, and Alec Lovat was one of them. A clever Scottish Secondary School boy was not the sort of Cambridge friend she had imagined for him, and

their common literary enthusiasms, in which she could not share, did not improve the situation. She had been so very eager to make this shy and angular youth feel at home, but his lack of response had not been encouraging; he persisted in remaining her son's friend and not hers. He recalled the little frown of displeasure with which she had heard of the meeting. 'Alec!' she had said, 'well, that is jolly. I expect he's changed a lot; the army's probably knocked most of the corners off him. He could be so nice when he forgot for a moment that he's worked his way up from the bottom. He was so very proud of his childish opinions, and so very ashamed of his delightful Scots accent.'

'The Scots accent's quite disappeared now', he had told her. 'Gracious me,' she had said, 'then he must certainly be laughed back into it.'

When the telephone rang that evening she had run to answer it. 'But, of course, you must come,' he had heard her say, and a moment later: 'Och! but what ha'e ye done wi' your gude Scots tongue? I hope ye no ha'e left it in Eetaly.'

She had chosen to invite a young French girl to meet Alec at dinner. She had a great liking for the dead conventionality and empty chic of French middle-class women, and this girl had been a superb specimen of her kind. The evening had not been a success. Poor Alec's shyness had only vanished for a moment when he began to speak of his new-found enthusiasm for the early Wordsworth. 'It's all nonsense', he had said excitedly, 'to expect the Prelude without that first attempt at a new freshness. Some of it's absurd if you like——' 'Now you're very naughty, Alec,' broke in Mrs. Carrington, 'I know you're only pulling our legs, but, gracious me, you'll have Mademoiselle Planquet thinking you mean it. Remember the dignity you have to uphold as the first real live Professor of English she's ever met.' When Alec protested his sincerity, she laughed a little and then said abruptly, 'Fiddlesticks, why I suppose you'll be telling me next that "The Idiot Boy" is the finest poem in the English language. I expect just the same nonsense goes on in France, Mademoiselle Planquet. As soon as we've got one stuffy old writer put safely away in the cupboard, these ridiculous children have to fish him out and dust him up again. They haven't got enough to do, that's the trouble.'

The Samuels' cocktail party, of course, had been asking for

trouble, but his mother had insisted on going. If she disliked Alec Lovat, she hated Rosa Samuel. The Samuels were richer and more sophisticated than she was. But, above everything, she was jealous of Rosa. That innocent visit he had made to them in Essex in summer 1942 had been the root of the trouble. 'Rosa Samuel behaved very stupidly with Donald,' she had told Aunt Nora.

Rosa, in her own words, 'had gone all 1912'. Her sleek, dark hair was piled up high on her head with some construction of scarlet fruit and feathers in it, and her scarlet velvet dress, which spread out in a train round her ankles, was cut up the side of its very tight skirt. Donald remembered that as she had come forward to greet them his heart had jumped with triumph; here at least he was on friendly soil, for Rosa had been his confidante and ally in all his battles. Almost immediately, however, he had felt sure that his mother would win. So, indeed, it had proved, for Rosa, in her mingled shyness and dislike, had foolishly set out to shock. She greeted them with a self-consciously amusing account of her return journey from Switzerland. It appeared that she had got into conversation with a young girl 'with the face of the Little Flower, my dear', but it had soon become clear the relations of the saint-like creature with her elderly uncle were not entirely conventional. 'Apparently, duckie,' Rosa had said in her deep, yet strangulated voice, 'he makes her stand in nothing but her stockings and thrashes her with a cowhide whip. But the incredible thing was that she told me all the horrifying details in an off-hand bored way, just as though she was describing a shopping expedition to the greengrocer's.' His mother had rocked with laughter. 'Goodness gracious, Mrs. Samuel,' she had said, 'it takes a really moral person like yourself to imagine that the lives of people like that *are* anything but very boring.' 'Old bitch!', Rosa had said to him later in the evening, 'I know she was as shocked as hell, but you can never catch her out.' His mother had not waited for her hostess to pass out of earshot before she had said to him: 'How it all reminds me of those Edwardian parties at Grandfather Carrington's down at Maidenhead. All this silly smoking-room smut, they want a good smack on the behind.'

'I can't help liking Rosa Samuel,' she had said, as they made their way home afterwards, 'she's so very stupid that it would really be impossible to dislike her. Someone ought to tell her about her clothes though, darling. Whatever *had* she got that

ridiculous Xmas-tree on her head for? And that scarlet dress! It was just like an early film of Pola Negri's. I kept on thinking she'd bring a secret message out of her bosom.' He had tried, he remembered, to turn the conversation on to a young woman archaeologist whom he had met at the party and liked; *her* clothes, at least, had been of the simplest variety. His mother, however, had been quite equal to this; indeed, there was nothing she liked better than to have things both ways. 'I thought she was a very nice girl,' she had said. 'It seemed such a pity that she had to wear those lumpy clothes and sensible shoes. You have to have such a very good complexion, too, to go without makeup like that. Anyone could see she was an intelligent person without all that parade. Dear me, they'll be wearing placards next with B.A., Oxon, or whatever it is, written on 'em!' A mood of compromise had descended upon him. Let me betray anything, let me sacrifice Rosa, let me forswear my belief in intellectual standards, he had thought, only let me be at peace with her; let us agree. He happened to have overheard a pretentious conversation about the theatre between three people at the party, and this he had told her, knowing that in so doing he was feeding her with ammunition for future attacks on his 'clever' friends.

'I sometimes wonder if they know themselves what they mean when they use this jargon', he had said. 'They were discussing a play, mother, and Olive Vernon said she didn't like it although she thought it was good theatre. "Good theatre," said her husband, "I thought it was thundering bad theatre." Then that stupid Stokes boy broke in: "I really don't think it was theatre at all; I mean, you have to have some glitter if you're going to have theatre, and it was so drab." "Oh, but that sort of drabness", said Olive in her silliest voice, "surely *is* just a kind of inverted glitter." His mother had been delighted with the story. 'They really *are* a pack of ninnies,' she had exclaimed.

How different she had been with Commander and Mrs. Stokes who dined with them the following evening! The Stokes, whom she had met during his absence, had proved to be a dull and somewhat self-satisfied couple, and it had been clear from the start that they were to be a kind of private joke between them. Whenever Mrs. Stokes had said something unusually snobbish, his mother had taken great delight in catching Donald's eye, whilst, at the end of a particularly long story of the Commander's

about life aboard the *Nelson*, she had smiled sweetly and said: 'Well, that's most interesting. I feel as though I'd been afloat for years, don't you, Donald?' After their guests had gone she had sat down and roared with laughter. 'You really are wicked, Donald,' she had cried, 'making me laugh at the poor creatures like that. They'll never set the Thames on fire, but still they're better than those silly intellectuals we met at the Samuels. Ah, well, thank God for a sense of humour; without it the evening might have been very dull!' How he had longed to say that even with it the evening had not been very interesting.

Politics, of course, had come under discussion when Uncle Ernest came to lunch. The open ruthlessness of his uncle's particular brand of city Conservatism always outraged his social conscience, and they had soon been engaged in a heated argument. His mother had been so amusing at both their expenses. 'You haven't given the Labour people a chance, Ernest,' she had declared. 'They've had no time to do anything yet. Remember that it's all quite new to them. Most of them have been mayors or town councillors or some other dreadful smug thing, and they're bound to be a bit dazed now they've got to *do* something. Why, by this time next year they'll be as sound old Tories as even *you* could want.'

The visit to Aunt Nora, of course, had brought the usual row with it. He flattered himself that he recognized the sense of duty and real kindness of heart that inspired these determined visits to that impoverished and irritating woman. It was true that Aunt Nora would have felt snubbed if they had not been to see her; but when he reflected that her silliness would lead his mother to say a hundred snubbing things before they had left 'Rose Cottage', it was not surprising that he had always found these expeditions depressing and pointless.

It had been without eagerness, then, that he walked through Richmond Park towards Aunt Nora's house. The day, he remembered so vividly, had been sunny and cold, and he had stood for a moment to gaze at the twisted grey elm trunks and their tracery of black boughs outlined against the sky. 'It would be nice,' he had said, 'to spend a day in the country before the holiday is over.' 'I dare say,' his mother had replied, 'but that's no excuse for being late for Nora. You know how she looks forward to this visit.' Suddenly the futility of the whole week had impressed

itself upon him. 'Damn Nora and damn you,' he had shouted, 'I never do a bloody thing I want to.' 'Really, Donald, that's ridiculous. The whole week's been given up to amusing you. In any case, we sometimes have to do our duty, even though we don't like it.' The calm common sense of her reply had been more than he could bear. It was too unfair that she should always have her cake and eat it in this way, he had felt. He had let out at her where he knew it would hurt most. 'Oh, for God's sake, spare us your quotations from Samuel Smiles. I know all about your religion,' he cried out, 'but the whole thing's meaningless. I don't believe you have any real *faith*—just a lot of sentiment and cherished illusions you've kept from your childhood.' His mother had begun to cry, for, as he well knew, in attacking her religion he had dealt her a serious blow. She had a number of ethical principles, and these she held firmly. She had also a certain private devotional life which centred round the prayer book she had been given at her confirmation. He had looked into this book when he was younger and had found between its leaves some love letters from his father written during their engagement, that happy period of her life before the physical contact of marriage had come to awaken and shock her, when she lived in that state of emotional flirtation, which she had tried to re-create with him. Of real religious beliefs concerning God and immortality she was quite uncertain, and far too afraid of her doubts to probe further. In speaking so violently, he had attacked the secret citadel of her life and she had only been able to find refuge in tears.

In a sense, it had been his only victory of the week, for, after it, she had been most anxious to make amends. She had realized that she must have annoyed him very deeply to provoke him to such an attack. 'My poor darling,' she had said, 'you must certainly have your walk in the woods.' They must go to his favourite Epping on the Friday, she had announced.

Friday had proved to be a wet and dismal day, but nothing would deter her from making the expedition. 'Nonsense, the walk will do you good!' she had said in answer to his protestations. They had been marooned in the forest during a violent rainstorm and had been drenched to the skin. On Saturday she had woken with a bad cold, but had remained on her feet with a depressing and determined cheerfulness. That night she had complained of sharp pains in the chest, and on the next day she had

developed pneumonia. Was it unnatural, he wondered, to have felt so little about it? No, surely, things had gone too far between them for him to have felt anything but an ashamed relief. The fight she had put up had roused his pity and admiration, though. She was a tough little woman, and she had a strong will to live, but she was, after all, fifty-eight, and death had taken her all the same. She had only been conscious once during the last two days of her life, and Donald had been at her bedside. He had hardly been able to recognize the little, thin, blue-grey face, or the vague, alarmed kitten's eyes, for she had known that she was dying and she had been very frightened. He had wished so much to comfort her, but he had only felt very, very tired. She had signed to him to bend down beside her and had run her hand feebly over his hair. 'My poor boy,' he had just been able to hear her murmur. 'My poor boy will be very lonely without Mother.'

Yes, life had been very hectic after her death, Donald thought as he stretched his limbs sensuously. His days were his own now to do as he liked, though it was strange how difficult he found it to decide what to do with them. That was to be expected with a new-found freedom; it was bound to take a little time; the main thing was that he was free. She had said that the walk in the forest 'would do him good', he thought sardonically—poor Mother, it was not really the sort of joke that she would have cared for. It was with a smile on his lips that he slipped into sleep. . . .

He was at a reception, many hundreds of people were there and he was talking animatedly. They were in a long, lofty room with great high windows and heavy curtains; it appeared to be in some medieval castle. Gradually a storm blew up outside, the winds howled and the heavy curtains flapped about in the huge room, like enormous birds; it began to grow very dark. The other people in the room huddled together in close little groups, but he was left standing alone. Soon the people began to fade away and it grew darker and darker. Somebody ought to be with him; he could not be left alone like this; somebody was not there who should have been there. He began to scream. He awoke with his face buried in the pillow, and he felt dreadfully lonely, so lonely that he began to cry. He told himself that this sense of solitude would pass with time, but in his heart he knew that this was not true. He might be free in little things, but in essentials she had tied

him to her, and now she had left him for ever. She had had the last word in the matter as usual. 'My poor boy will be lonely,' she had said. She was dead right.

HUMPHREY HARE

STUDIES IN GENIUS: III

SWINBURNE AND 'LE VICE ANGLAIS'

'Quand on fait une étude sur un homme considérable il faut tout regarder, tout voir et au moins tout indiquer.'—Sainte-Beuve.

'I AM told', remarked Queen Victoria upon Tennyson's death, 'that Mr. Swinburne is the best poet in my dominions.' But Mr. Gladstone demurred, and the laureateship went to Alfred Austin. Nevertheless, it was the measure of a surrender, the reward of conformity. Watts-Dunton, as chaperon, might be justly proud. Already, like a garden Apollo, Swinburne's nakedness was hedged about with the variegated laurels of nineteenth-century propriety. The shrubbery was to grow more dense. By 1909 twenty-five unimpeachable volumes had issued from Putney, while upon the poet's death Edmund Gosse added the camouflage of a whimsical, if official, biography. A portrait was presented of an excitable, elfin creature with flaming hair and green eyes, fluttering hands and 'epileptiform' fits, the possessor of a talent which, since it was allied to a perfect gentility, was excusable if regrettably disconcerting. A label was invented to discount the outcry with which *Poems and Ballads* had been received in 1866—an outcry which still lingered in elderly memories. What had it all been about? *Songs before Sunrise* gave the cue. Swinburne became 'The Poet of Revolt'.

In a sense this was perfectly true, but in a sense quite other than was intended, and infinitely more subtle. It was not until *La Jeunesse de Swinburne* appeared in 1928 that Swinburne was exhumed from the dank, concealing clay to which the literary sextons had consigned him. Without Lafourcade's imaginative scholarship Swinburne would still remain what Gosse and

Mr. Harold Nicolson were content to have him be: an inexplicable phenomenon. 'There will be those, doubtless,' wrote the latter, 'who . . . will trace depressing and essentially erroneous analogies to Dr. Masoch and the Marquis de Sade. . . .'

The artist, like the saint and the criminal, tends to be maladjusted. His sensitivity alone forbids him to accept unquestioned society's rules and taboos, its standards and ethics; for him its synthesis is either too exclusive or too inclusive. According to his temperament and capacity he seeks, consciously or not, to create a synthesis of his own. Essentially it is a rival one. He becomes a revolutionary, and society reacts with the brutality engendered by fear. When it becomes apparent, as in the case of Swinburne, that this rival synthesis is founded upon so apparently dangerous an aberration as algolagnia, the reaction is intensified. Society hits out wildly in a crisis of self-preservation. It may ban the books, burn the pictures and imprison the artist. But this is a confession of weakness. Swinburne was, perhaps, more fortunate. Nineteenth-century England was very conscious of its strength. It contented itself with the lesser forms of persecution; it could afford to wait. Patience was rewarded. The impotent husk of a poet at least was safely garnered. Mr. Gladstone need have had no fears; the royal instinct was, as ever, sure.

Perhaps no century was more conscious of its moral inhibitions than the nineteenth. Perhaps, too, this is the measure of its æsthetic achievement: great art is in its essence revolutionary, and to revolt there must be something to rebel against. The grand moralities, the consciousness of an ordered world progressing evenly towards the power and the glory of an undefined Utopia formed a citadel of complacency which the eccentric was irresistibly impelled to breach. In what, exactly, did Swinburne's eccentricity consist? The algolagnia, which was to become so notorious and acquire so European a reputation that no novelist in the last decade of the century could create a character who practised *le vice anglais* without attributing to him some of Swinburne's physical characteristics—an honour which, due largely to Maupassant, he shares with George Selwyn—was far more than a regrettable sexual aberration. The pornography of *The Flogging Block* and *The Whippingham Papers*, the ridiculous indecencies of the correspondence, were but symptomatic of an emotion which was infinitely more profound, of an anguished

sensitivity which was of the very essence of his being and with which he responded to an outer world, whose impressions he received with an overwhelming intensity, with a shock, which left pleasure and pain inextricably confounded.

If the unpublished autobiographical novel, *Lesbia Brandon*, is to be trusted, this peculiar confusion was present from the first. The young Swinburne was brought up by the sea, in the Isle of Wight and in Northumberland. He responded to it with an enduring passion; but a passion of an altogether particular kind. 'Bertie' receives the spirit of the sea with 'fleshy pleasure', with 'a furious luxury of the senses', which 'kindled all his nerves and exalted his life'. 'The surging of the surf made him red from the shoulders to the knees and sent him on shore whipped by the sea into a single blush of the whole skin.' And 'the knowledge of how many lives went yearly to feed with blood the lovely lips of the sea-furies . . . gave point to his pleasure and a sheathed edge of cruel sympathy to his love. All cruelties and treacheries, all subtle appetites and violent secrets of the sea, were part of her divine nature, adorable and acceptable to her lovers.' Indeed, the first manifestations of his temperament were probably pantheistic, a feeling of exaltation in the presence of nature, a heightening of perception, which was stimulated to an exaggerated degree by the apprehension of the pain and suffering she could inflict—suffering which at the same time was both feared and ardently desired. From the first he was intoxicated by 'the pleasure there is in pain'. Here, too, on these blue foolscap sheets, he was able to recapture the mystical enchantment, the delicious anguish, of evenings in the nursery at Capheaton when his mother read the Border Ballads, which were probably his first experience of verse. 'Things in verse hurt one, don't they? Verse hurts terribly. . . . Never write verses when you get big; people who do are mad or bad or sick. . . . It is odd that words should change so just by being put into rhyme. They get teeth and bite; they take fire and burn. I wonder who first thought of tying words up and twisting them back to make verses, and hurt and delight all people in the world for ever. For one can't do without it now. . . . One can't tell where the pain or the pleasure ends or begins. "Who shall determine the limits of pleasure?" That is a grand wise word.'

This incapacity to formulate the normal dichotomy between pleasure and pain permeated his whole life. In the same way that

masochism becomes so easily sadistic—in the sense that there is a desire to give the loved one pleasure by inflicting pain—so in Swinburne a submissiveness, evident in the hero-worship lavished upon Landor, Hugo and Mazzini, and the complete self-abandonment to the will of Watts-Dunton, is allied to a rebelliousness which caused him to leave prematurely both Eton and Oxford, to adopt in politics a violent republicanism and to become embroiled in a continuous series of needless disputes. This is the clue to much which would otherwise be incomprehensible.

His awareness of abnormality caused him almost continuous uneasiness, and, at times, considerable unhappiness. Those unusual reactions to sea-bathing, the curious fascination to be derived from the tender bullying of his girl cousins who lived nearby, and, at Eton, the pleasurable agonies of the birch, began early to induce in him a sense of isolation. It became tragically and increasingly clear to him that he was differently constituted to other people. What was to be done? Belonging, as he did, to a class that was becoming progressively more intolerant of the eccentric, his instinct was to conceal the abnormality. The cloak he selected was the uniform of the Dragoons. This, with his nervous and diminutive physique, was clearly grotesque and was promptly vetoed by his father. Denied, therefore, the anodyne of a fashionable profession, and one—who could tell?—which might have conditioned him to that normality he so ardently desired, he went up to Oxford in a state of considerable disquiet. And Oxford showed him an alternative. Though the longing to conform was never altogether suppressed, was, indeed, to recur at intervals till ultimately it triumphed, he discovered, with his first serious attempts at creation, the true basis of his inspiration. The abnormality was to be exploited.

On the authority of his cousin, Mrs. Disney Leith, we know that Swinburne had in childhood written numbers of 'blood-curdling dramas'. One manuscript survives—that of *The Unhappy Revenge*, composed at Eton at the age of thirteen. It shows already a precocious reverence for the minor Elizabethan dramatists and a sense of the possibilities of discovering voluptuous pleasures in martyrdom. At Oxford, though the element of *pastiche* is still present in the surviving dramatic fragments—*The Laws of Corinth*, *Laugh and Lie Down*, and *The Loyal Servant*—the algolagnia is a direct personal expression, unintellectualized, unsublimated. In

Laugh and Lie Down the flagellated page at the mercy of his beautiful mistress is identifiable with Swinburne himself (as is the chronicler of Lucrezia Borgia in the *Chronicles of Tebaldeo Tebaldei* and the young chorister in *Rosamond*, Arthur, who bears on his body 'the stripes of last red week'). There is no ambiguity in their relationship. His pains are offered up on the altar of his love.

IMPERIA: Come, come, you are not old enough.

FRANK: I have bled for your sake some twenty times a month. Some twenty drops each time; are these no services?

IMPERIA: I tell you, if you use me lovingly,
I shall have you whipt again, most pitifully whipt
You little piece of love.

FRANK: God knows I care not
So I may stand and play to you, and you kiss me . . .
What makes you sigh still? You are now
So kind, the sweetness in you stabs mine eyes
With sharp tears through. I would so fain be hurt
But really hurt, hurt deadly, to do good
To your most sudden fancy.

It was at this point that the Pre-Raphaelites descended upon Oxford, Rossetti at their head, Millais and Burne-Jones in his train, to paint the evanescent frescoes in the Union. The astonishing fact about the P.R.B. was that its relative success as a movement was combined with a complete lack of any community of artistic practice. The nebulous ideals upon which the first Brotherhood had been founded had led to a wide divergence of interpretation amongst its members, had led, indeed, Hunt to the shores of the Dead Sea, where, in ascetic if traditional surroundings, a tethered, flea-bitten animal posed for 'The Scapegoat', had led Millais to the deer-forest, the hunting-field and the drawing-rooms of Mayfair, had led Woolner to the Antipodes and Rossetti to the earnest contemplation—and depiction—of beautiful women to whom he applied the epithet 'stunner'. His ideal was medieval woman, a dolorous, romantic creature moving amid the sanguinary complexities of history and legend. It became Swinburne's, too. Rosamond, the unfortunate mistress of Henry II, whose tragic and horrible death had through centuries of chronicles and ballads become a poetic myth, was a likely subject for inspiration. Both Rossetti and Burne-Jones painted pictures of the 'Rosa mundi,

non Rosa munda', while for Swinburne the story was the opportunity for his first essay in the establishment of his prototype of the *femme fatale*. Rosamond describes herself:

Yea, I am found the woman in all tales,
 The face caught always in the story's face:
 I, Helen, holding Paris by the lips,
 Smote Hector through the head; I, Cressida
 So kissed men's mouths that they went sick or mad,
 Stung right at brain with me: I, Guinevere
 Made my queen's eyes so precious and my hair
 Delicate with such gold in its soft ways
 And my mouth honied so for Launcelot . . .

Rosamond was published together with *The Queen Mother* in 1860. The plot of the latter is concerned with the events which culminated in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve. The theme was one which suited him exactly. His imagination was fired by the tumult, the torchlight, the crimson horror of the night, the sadistic laughter of the Court ladies and the King's bestial delirium. 'Il prist fort grand plaisir de voir passer soubz ses fenêtres par la rivière plus de 4,000 corps ou se noyans ou tuez,' recorded Brantôme. And Swinburne makes the Queen comment:

All's clear again, he smells about the blood
 That shall incense his madness to high strain.

The presentation of the massacre has an almost Neronic complacency. But obviously there was no room in this drama, side by side with a monstrous Charles IX, for a dominant *femme fatale*. The King's relations with his mistress, Denise, however, show all the accustomed characteristics. She tells him:

Now I would kill you here between the eyes
 Plant the steel's bare chill where I set my mouth. . . .

The publication of these two dramas passed unnoticed. 'Of all still-born books,' wrote Swinburne, 'it was the stillest.' It was to be five years before he published another—*Atalanta in Calydon*.

Nevertheless, long before *Atalanta* was conceived, he was composing *Chastelard*, of which a draft of the first act at least was in existence by the time he left Oxford, and the poems that were to appear in *Poems and Ballads*. *Chastelard* is the climax of this phase of his development. His main sources for this historical

drama were Brantôme's *Discours sur Marie Stuart* and Knox's *History of the Reformation*. From these, with one or two legitimate and comparatively minor alterations of fact—the date of Mary Stuart's marriage to Darnley, for instance—he built up his intrigue and its culminating tragedy. But, however correct his historical detail may have been, the chief characters are largely his own invention. With Chastelard he had necessarily a completely free hand since almost nothing is known of him. While Mary Stuart, though he had endowed her with an acute intellect and a practical folly of conduct—a paradox which seems to be upheld by the historians—is in her one important characteristic, as far as the drama is concerned, a projection of Chastelard's own mind—that is in her cruelty. She is the apotheosis of the *femme fatale*, the source of those twin inseparable gifts, love and death.

I know not: men must love you in life's spite;
 For you will always kill them, man by man
 Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you would,
 You shall not spare one; all will die of you. . . .

And this sphinx-like, marmoreal cruelty—for which there is no warrant but Chastelard's last words on the scaffold: 'Adieu, la plus belle et la plus cruelle princesse du monde'—is accepted by Chastelard with a perverse alacrity, an ecstasy of self-immolation. Condemned to death for compromising the Queen—deliberately forcing her to condemn him to death, since it is only thus that he can attain to the summit of pleasure—he refuses to escape and destroys the royal pardon.

And in the last interview in the prison, before the execution, there takes place a scene between Chastelard and Mary which for imaginative perversity is unsurpassed even by Swinburne himself. The Queen is at once his lover and his executioner:

Stretch your throat out that I may kiss all round
 Where mine shall be cut through: suppose my mouth
 The axe-edge to bite so sweet a throat in twain
 With bitter iron, should not it turn soft
 As lip is soft to lip?

This is the most purely sensual, the most purely physical of all his dramas. And it is notable that the dramatic success of this play is as far in advance of the previous dramas as is the boldness with which he identifies his own imagination with Chastelard's. The

whipped page of *Laugh and Lie Down* has become the central character of the piece—a Queen's lover ordered to the scaffold by his mistress. It is significant, too, that with Chastelard's death, the Queen loses her syren quality, survives only as an intellectual reconstruction of an historical character—possibly more accurate, certainly less interesting—which accounts for the failure of *Bothwell* and *Mary Stuart*, which were to be written many years later as the second and third parts of the trilogy.

Till he had achieved success with *Atalanta*, his friends advised against the publication either of the poems or *Chastelard*. Rossetti issued serious warnings; Ruskin said they would 'win him a dark reputation'. He was condemned to five years' silence—years, nevertheless, of crucial development. The inner necessity for a justifying synthesis was about to be satisfied, the algolagnic aberration to be rationalized. And this process was due in the main to the intervention of two people, Lord Houghton and Whistler.

A patron of the arts, Houghton first invited Swinburne to Fryston in 1861 and for a number of years showed him great kindness and friendliness. And yet was there not something feline in his friendship—something of cynicism behind his kindness? Was it that, hospitable, his guests were nevertheless selected with a sardonic delight in their incompatibilities, or, possibly, in their even more startling affinities? With admirable catholicity of taste, he could extract the greatest delight from persuading Swinburne to recite *The Leper* and *Les Noyades* in the presence of the Archbishop of York, and in watching the results of presenting his protégé to Richard Burton. And his patronage was inconstant, forfeited by failure, regained by success. Jowett called him 'the Barometer', and Burton once exclaimed, 'Some good luck must be coming my way, Houghton has been so damned civil'. He played upon the characters of his friends. Fascinated by their vices, without moral inhibitions, he encouraged them for his own almost scientific pleasure. 'Oh! how wide is the diapason of my mind,' he exclaimed, 'from what a height to what a depth!' Swinburne's character was one which was eminently suited to the play of Lord Houghton's talents. He was immediately aware of its abnormalities. With what interest might they not be developed! At Fryston Lord Houghton kept his collection of *erotica*. 'He is', wrote Swinburne in 1869, 'the Sadique collector of European fame. His

erotic collections of books, engravings, etc., is unrivalled upon earth—unequalled, I should imagine, in heaven.' And already, in October 1860, he had written to Lord Houghton: 'Reserving always your corresponding promise that I am yet to live and look upon the mystic pages of the martyred Marquis de Sade, ever since which the vision of that illustrious and ill-requited benefactor of humanity has hovered by night before my eyes'. But now the martyred Marquis had need to hover no longer. In an illustrated edition of *Justine*, Swinburne was able to discover the grotesque philosophy which was the justification of his own perverse desires.

The influence of Whistler, who had but recently come from Paris, is less easy to gauge. Imbued with the philosophy of Art for Art's sake, which was the contemporary aesthetic fashion in the ateliers, he was, if not responsible for Swinburne's conversion, probably the only supporter in England of its exposition in the columns of *The Spectator*. The occasion was a review of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. There is a tradition that the article was written in a Turkish bath in Paris. Privately, Swinburne was no stranger to the theory. He had read *Mademoiselle de Maupin* while at Oxford, and had not Gautier maintained that 'un drame n'est pas un chemin de fer', that art was independent of all moral, political or scientific ends, that it had no obligations towards civilization or progress? And had not Baudelaire himself elaborated a similar theory which Poe had announced in *The Poetic Principle*? For Baudelaire, Swinburne felt a particular affinity. *Les Fleurs du Mal* had been bowdlerized at the hands of the law; its author had won that 'dark reputation' from which Swinburne was only preserved by the pressing advice of his friends. By justifying Baudelaire he was justifying himself. 'Perfect workmanship', he wrote, 'makes every subject admirable and respectable.' But at this first attempt even Baudelaire thought that he had overstated his case, that the defence was misconceived when Swinburne wrote: 'The writer believes that there is not one poem of the *Fleurs du Mal* which has not a vivid and distinct background of morality to it'.

It was also this year, 1862, that he began his *William Blake*. This, by a sort of sleight of hand, imposed upon his subject the theory of Art for Art's sake—a theory which Blake would have been the first to question. But it was directed not only at the sententious critics of the reviews, who were accustomed to judge works of art more by their moral than their aesthetic content, but

also at such luminaries of art as Carlyle and Ruskin. The fact was that no one in England appeared able to conceive of art except in terms of usefulness and moral purpose. The idea that it might be fulfilling itself merely by existing to be enjoyed was quite alien to the mid-Victorian mind. 'The Fine Arts, too,' Carlyle had written with no false humility, 'like the coarse, and every art of Man's God-given faculty, are to understand that they are sent hither not to fib and dance, but to speak and work . . .', while Ruskin had announced that 'the choice of the high subject involves all conditions of right moral choice'. To all of which Swinburne replied: 'Art for Art's sake first of all and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her (or if not she need hardly be overmuch concerned)'. It is curious to reflect that the originator of the *Æsthetic* movement in England—should have been the first to abandon it. For in 1867, a year even before *William Blake* was published, Swinburne was to accept with tears and protestations the over-whelming personal ascendancy of Mazzini and devote his art to utilitarian ends.

But in the middle of all this—with correspondence with Baudelaire and visits to Paris under Whistler's auspices to meet Manet and Fantin-Latour—there was to be another of these significant snatches at normality. He had been introduced some time in 1861 to the eminent pathologist, Sir John Simon, and his wife. They were interested in the Pre-Raphaelite movement and friends of Ruskin, Burne-Jones and Woolner. In their house he met Jane Faulkner, a niece whom they had adopted. With 'Boo', as she was called, Swinburne proceeded to fall in love, an emotion which he manifested with all the proper procedure of the period. He gave her flowers, he attended her at the piano and turned the music while she played and sang. He wrote her tender and innocent little verses. Suddenly he made up his mind to propose. Surprised and nervous at the violence of his protestations, the dramatic form of his declaration, 'Boo', who had no intention of marrying him, laughed in his face. After a furious scene, Swinburne left the house for ever. It may be questioned whether the marriage could in any circumstances have been a success. But was there not in the violence of his chagrin, in the depths of his sorrow and despair, not only the pain of the rejected lover, but something else—a tragically apprehended foreboding?

In the *Triumph of Time* he poured out his grief. This, one of the

most sure and sustained of all his lyrics, is strictly autobiographical. Even the flowers and the music are there. He visualized the future as it might have been in heart-breaking stanzas:

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
 As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
 Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
 Death consume as a thing unclean.
 Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast
 Soul to soul as the years fell past;
 Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
 Had the chance been with us that has not been.

But the 'chance' had not been with him. The chance of what? Not only of winning 'Boo' but, it may be supposed, of leading a normal life. Now he was thrown back, a drowning man, amid the sterile surges of 'the raptures vice'. Henceforward:

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
 Fill the days of my daily breath
 With fugitive things not good to treasure. . . .

Denied 'Boo', what was there left to him but Dolores?

It was now time, everyone was agreed, that Swinburne should produce a masterpiece; one, moreover, that might be safely published. It was probably Lord Houghton, anxious that his patronage should be justified without further delay, who suggested the classic form. It would have certain advantages. The cruel myths of the Middle Ages were obviously too dangerous, too exciting to Swinburne's temperament, whereas, in the convention of the Greek drama, tragedy and its implicit cruelty gained a certain impersonality, a saving lack of sensuality from their supernatural origin. No suggestion, oddly enough, could at this juncture have been better suited to Swinburne's inspiration. The rebuff he had suffered had but confirmed the direction of his mind and the necessity for the poetical exploitation of his temperament. But now the *femme fatale*, as a projection of his imagination, was no longer sufficient. The study of Blake and Sade had caused him to rationalize those tendencies which she had hitherto been created to represent. A process of expansion was taking place in his mind, a synthesis was being formulated and its inclusiveness demanded that the *femme fatale* as the origin of pain should be replaced by God.

The theme of *Atalanta in Calydon* is a complaint against human destiny, against the cruelty of the Gods who mingle pain with pleasure, permit no happiness to be unalloyed with sorrow, no life to be unabridged by death. Swinburne has discovered that the law of suffering which he had discerned in the passions has a universal application.

Before the beginning of years
 There came to the making of man
 Time, with a gift of tears;
 Grief, with a glass that ran;
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
 Summer, with flowers that fell;
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,
 And madness risen from hell;
 Strength without hands to smite;
 Love that endures for a breath;
 Night, the shadow of light,
 And life, the shadow of death.

Instead of the fatalistic theology of the Greek drama, the acceptance of the divinely inspired tragedy with apathetic lamentation, Swinburne, largely through the media of the choruses, carries his critical warfare into the divine camp, storming Olympus itself with blasphemy upon his lips. There is only one possible conception of God. It is He who has 'filled us full to the eyes and ears' with the agony implicit in living. It is the gods who 'mock us with a little piteousness', who 'at the last, sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit'. But of what use is the suffering of humanity unless it is in itself pleasing to God, who savours it with a voluptuous and sadic cruelty? 'What shall be done with all these tears of ours . . . ? A great well-head of lamentation satiating the sad Gods . . . !' And this conception of God was largely drawn from Blake's *Prophetic Books*—'O, Urizen, Creator of Men! Mistaken Demon of heaven, Thy joys are tears . . . ', from *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and 'This abstract nonentity, This cloudy God, seated on waters, Now seen, now obscured, King of sorrow . . . ', from *The Book of Ahania*—while in his own *William Blake* Urizen is 'God of cloud and star, "Father of Jealousy", clothed with a splendour of shadow, strong and sad and cruel . . . sorrow is in all his works . . . ' And in the fourth

chorus of *Atalanta* there is the resounding denunciation: 'Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us . . .' God is the supreme enemy:

When has thou seen: or hast thou felt his breath
 Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,
 Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?
 None hath beheld him, none
 Seen above other gods and shapes of things,
 Swift without feet and flying without wings,
 Intolerable, not clad with death or life,
 Insatiable, not known of night or day,
 The lord of love and loathing and of strife
 Who gives a star and takes a sun away;
 Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
 To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;
 Who turns the large limbs to a little flame
 And binds the great sea with a little sand;
 Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;
 Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;
 Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
 Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
 Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;
 The supreme evil, God.

Though the conception of the person of the divinity was to some extent borrowed from Blake, the perverse and anarchic pessimism that informed his 'theory of the diabolic government of this world', to which he admitted in a letter to Nichol, was derived from Sade. To Lord Houghton he wrote, alluding to his article on *Atalanta* in *The Edinburgh Review*, ' . . . you have wilfully misrepresented its source. I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of "Byron with a difference" you had said, "de Sade with a difference".' Indeed, from Sade's tenebrous prose, from *Justine* and *Juliette*, he drew the general tone of his blasphemies: 'Le mal est nécessaire à l'organisation vicieuse de ce triste univers. Dieu est très vindicatif, méchant, injuste. Les suites du mal sont éternelles; c'est dans le mal qu'il a créé le monde; c'est pour le mal qu'il le perpétue; c'est imprégnée de mal que la créature doit exister; c'est dans le sein du mal qu'elle retourne après son existence. . . . Telle est la loi de l'Univers.' And then,

with a final perversity, he admitted in a letter that God was for him 'the absurdest of all human figments'. But Sade had already resolved the paradox. He had declared 'formellement, authentiquement, publiquement, que je n'ai pas dans toi la plus légère croyance', and yet, because 'les trois quarts de l'Europe attachent des idées très religieuses à cette hostie . . . à ce crucifix . . . j'aime à les profaner; je fronde l'opinion publique, cela m'amuse; je foule aux pieds les préjugés de mon enfance, je les anéantis; cela m'échauffe la tête'. In attacking God, the myth, Swinburne was attacking society itself. It was the inevitable result of his matured genius. The synthesis was complete. The innate instinct, the acquired philosophy and the æsthetic imperative had become integrated and fused. In *Atalanta*, the fusion is as complete as he was ever able to achieve, and the result a masterpiece.

Indeed, it is difficult for the critic to approach *Atalanta* without enthusiasm. Here is the perfectly oriented work. However alien the implicit theme, it is expressed with a matchless perfection, a tact which never permits it to dominate the formal structure of the drama. The selection of the classical myth of the revenge of Artemis upon Calydon permitted him to work within a convention unhampered by the dictates of reality, absolved him from the necessity of creating characters which was not a projection to which his genius lent itself with any facility. *Atalanta* is not in its essence a tragedy of blighted love or the death of youth: but rather a philosophic lament for this our earthly state. The main personages are symbols representing the forces of nature as he saw them in his Sadic pessimism: Althaea, the earth-mother, fecund and fatal; Atalanta, love, the origin of pleasure and pain; and Meleager, suffering humanity, the helpless victim, accepting his destiny with passive fatalism. The story is perfectly suited to the theme. Artemis in her fury against Calydon sends Atalanta, the Virgin of Arcadia, to take part in the tragic boar hunt, causes Meleager, the King's son, to fall in love with her, to quarrel on her account with his mother's brothers, Toxæus and the 'violent-souled' Plexippus, and to kill them. And then impels Althaea, Meleager's mother, to place upon the fire the magic brand on which his life depends. As it is consumed so Meleager dies.

The figures move in response to relentless and elemental stimuli. Their tragedy does not arise out of them, but is arbitrarily imposed upon them. They are not of flesh and blood, but rather

the inmates of a frieze whose ordered, tragic harmonies are fixed eternally by the unaccountable fury of the gods. And yet, as in the Greek drama, Swinburne permits his characters to comprehend the full horror of their actions, even in their senseless performance. Althæa has placed the brand upon the fire:

CHORUS: I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

ALTHÆA: Gaze, stretch your eyes; strain till the lids drop off.

CHORUS: Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule:

ALTHÆA: Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.

CHORUS: And a long brand that blackens: and white dust.

ALTHÆA: O children what is this ye see? your eyes
Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.
That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,
My travail, and the year's weight of my womb.
Meleager, a fire unkindled of my hands
And of my hands extinguished; this is he.

CHORUS: O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth?

ALTHÆA: I did this and I say this and I die.

And Meleager, true to his passive role, aware that it is a divine madness that has compelled the tragedy, blames fate alone, exonerating his mother. Neither does he evince any anger against the gods. His rage at the 'diabolic government of this world', Swinburne reserved, as has already been indicated, for the choruses. Meleager's passive acceptance of suffering and death is—as, increasingly in Swinburne's view, is humanity's—almost contemptible.

I would thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I
Thee; but this death was mixed with all my life,
Mine end with mine beginning: and this law,
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.

But preluding the Exodus is the Kommos. Swinburne never surpassed the magnificence of this symphonic passage. The antiphonal voices answering each other in transcendent melody is overwhelming in its effect of pathos and horror. All the elusive rhythms of the tragedy are here knotted together into an exquisitely harmonic culmination. The heavy drum-beats of the

first four lines in each stanza, the crying of the fifth, form a matchless metrical achievement.

MELEAGER

Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;

For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

CHORUS

O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes!
O the grief, O the grace,
As of day when it dies!

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs?

* * *

ATALANTA

I would that with feet
Unsandalled, unshod,
Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod

From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy of God.

MELEAGER

Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath;

Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

CHORUS

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,

Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail and labour and fear.

The strange echoing beauty of these sad and faultless stanzas merges into Meleager's dying speech. Then Atalanta embraces

him for the first and last time as he goes 'down to the empty weary house Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes'. And in two lines oppressive with sorrow she bids him adieu.

Hail thou: but I with heavy face and feet
Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

The effect of *Atalanta* is cumulative and its impact overwhelming. The critics were unable to deny that a new, an undoubted note of genius had been struck. The response of both critics and public was all that Swinburne had ever desired. In the words of Edmund Gosse he 'shot like a rocket into celebrity'. He found himself exposed upon a solitary eminence of English letters. The prospect glowed with a deceptive charm. It was true that *The Tablet* deplored, in duty bound, the poet's want of faith and that Christina Rossetti was reported to have pasted concealing strips of paper over the two blasphemous lines in the fourth chorus—but she was known to be of an excessive strictness. These warnings were lost in the consensus of praise. Except for Lord Houghton, who had 'stable information', no one seemed to have understood what *Atalanta* was about. Seduced by the revelation of a new music in English poetry, the critics omitted to look beneath the surface for a philosophy that was so remote from the mid-Victorian cosmos. Encouraged by success, Swinburne proceeded to elucidate. A few months later *Chastelard* was published, and in the next year, 1866, appeared *Poems and Ballads*.

Chastelard was received upon a note of puzzled interrogation. No one quite liked to condemn the author of *Atalanta*. But where was all this tending? The publication of *Poems and Ballads* removed all doubt. The critics made certain that this time there should be no misunderstanding. There was a moral duty to point out what the innocent public might well have missed. And was it not all the more dangerous since, as Professor Henry Morley discovered in one of the very few favourable reviews, there was 'a terrible earnestness about this book'? It was certainly an earnestness that appealed to the young. For them it was a liberation, a long-awaited revolution in contemporary literature. But the critics need not have been dismayed. *Poems and Ballads* was tending nowhere—unless it was to the innocuous politics of *Songs before Sunrise*. In a sense it was but the commentary upon the process of development which had culminated in the synthesis of *Atalanta*. It was an anthology of seven years of verse—seven

years of varied emotions gradually dominated by a single theme to which all others had become subordinate. It was a dead end. The synthesis achieved, the commentary published, the solitary eminence was to be promptly abandoned.

In spite of the fact that the dates of composition of most of the poems in *Poems and Ballads*—all written between 1858 and 1865—are known, it is useless to expect them to be a series of precise statements exposing in chronological order the development of Swinburne's thought. He was no logician, but a lyric poet beset by a multitude of emotions and influences. All that is possible here is to give in broad outline the incidence of the Sadic theme which is the dominant emotion of the volume, and whose culmination in *Anactoria* was exactly contemporary with the composition of *Atalanta*.

In the early poems it is easy to distinguish the first bloom of an undirected talent, the early undergraduate enthusiasms without system and without consequence. His retentive mind was stored with a wide historical reading, and his imagination fired by the Pre-Raphaelites into a sumptuous magnificence. Indeed, here, in these early poems, is the bright panoply of forming genius. But under the Pre-Raphaelite cloak, covering a multiplicity of inspirations, there is nevertheless a charged and personal emotion. Taken in conjunction with the early dramatic fragments, with *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother*, there is a difference, felt as yet but obscurely, between his aspirations and those of the literature of the period. His sensitivity is unquestioned; but what form was its expression to take?

I sang these things long since and knew them not;
 'Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
 This man and that finds favour in his eycs,'
 I said, 'but I, what guerdon have I got?'

Sappho and Faustine, 'the sterile growths of sexless root', the cruel infecundities of the love to which he was condemned, formed the intolerable basis of his fantasies. Their expression necessitated the theory of Art for Art's sake. How could desires so innate be wrong? The perfection of their expression, the beauty of that expression's form, was, indeed *must* be, a substitute for morality, was, surely, morality itself? In *A Ballad of Life* and *A Ballad of Death*, written in 1862, he pursued this theory to its farthest limits.

With them he opened *Poems and Ballads*. It was an explanation of the contents of the volume, a propounding of its pervasive æsthetic attitude.

Ah ! in the days when God did good to me,
 Each part about her was a righteous thing ;
 Her mouth an almsgiving,
 The glory of her garments charity,
 The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
 In the good days when God kept sight of us ;
 Love lay upon her eyes,
 And on that hair whereof the world takes heed ;
 And all her body was more virtuous
 Than scores of women fashioned otherwise.

And yet in the first rhapsodies of his love for 'Boo', Faustine and her disquieting allurements were abandoned. New hopes and aspirations dawned in him. His disappointment and frustration were tragically expressed in *The Triumph of Time*, which has already been referred to in its biographical place. It is in the denial of this sane and normal love, in his rejection by the one being that had the power to deliver him from Dolores, that lies the tragic core of *Poems and Ballads*. Half-consciously he knew now that he was condemned to be 'a barren stock'. The reaction was exactly what might have been expected : he turned back to the 'violent delights which have violent ends'. *Anactoria* is the fierce symbol of that reaction :

I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
 Intense device and superflux of pain ;
 Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
 Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache ;
 Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
 Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill ;
 Relapse and reluctance of the breath,
 Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.

Reinforced by the agony of personal tragedy, the idea of beauty throughout *Poems and Ballads* is never pure : with it both pleasure and pain are inextricably confused with, indeed, the emphasis upon the latter.

Ah, ah, thy beauty, like a beast it bites,
 Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites. . . .

He set himself to analyse and develop this esoteric fusion. Cruelty becomes an essential attribute of the loved one. The desire to inflict it must be there as well as the craving to lie passive beneath its onslaught.

—O Sweet,

Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death. . . .

But this passivity is capable of a delicate transition. If the desire to suffer at the hands of the loved one is a manifestation of love, it must be common to all lovers. Necessarily, therefore, the infliction of pain must also be one of love's attributes:

Cruel? But love makes all that loves him well
As wise as heaven and crueler than hell.

This active sadism is expressed over and over again throughout *Poems and Ballads*. One quotation will suffice to make the point. Here the algolagnia is carried to the last extreme. In the link which may be traced with the mock solemnities of the Cannibal Club, with Burton's semi-serious theory of anthropophagy ('Without cannibalism how could the Zealander have preserved his fine physical development?'), different though these levels of seriousness are, the pervasiveness of the emotion in his consciousness becomes clear.

Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!
Ah that my mouth for Muse's milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!

And in *Dolores* he announced once and for all this strange duality: the fundamental mixture of joy and suffering. But this paradox was not, as we have already seen in the case of *Atalanta*, limited to a mere theory of love. The anguished sensibility with which he responded to the Beautiful, of which the passions were only one manifestation, drove him on with

the assistance of Sade to discover a universal law of suffering applicable to all nature. Ruin and destruction are the great principles upon which the universe is founded: to create is to destroy, to live is to suffer.

For who shall change with prayers and thanksgivings
 The mystery of the cruelty of things?
 Or say what God above all gods and years
 With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
 With lamentation from strange lands, from graves
 Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,
 From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
 Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—
 With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair
 Of comets desolating the dim air,
 When darkness is made fast by seals and bars,
 And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
 Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
 Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
 With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light
 And travail of the planets of the night,
 And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
 Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?

And this expression of a cosmic pessimism, this 'vision of ghastly glory', had certain necessary consequences. If the universe is based on a principle of suffering and death, these must also be the attributes of its creator. God must be essentially evil and cruel. 'Is not his incense bitterness, his meat Murder?' The accent is identical with the fourth Chorus of *Atalanta*, though *Anactoria* permitted a scope beyond the necessary confines of the drama.

Yet at the very moment of completing the synthesis it was to be abandoned. Can the seeds of its disintegration be detected already in *Félice*?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears
 Till all these things be drawn in one,
 The sound of iron-footed years,
 And all the oppression that is done
 Under the sun?

Indeed, he had perhaps already half-perceived the contradiction implicit in Sade's philosophy. To revolt against 'a human

figment' may be an admirable basis for polemics but is not sound logic. And now he was to follow Ruskin's advice 'that "genius ought to devote itself" to the behalf of humanity and "to overthrow its idols", in a word', as he expressed it, 'to justify the ways of Urien to the sons of Enitharmon. Quelle horreur!' But, indeed, the reasons for the *volte face* are complex and obscure. Was it that, seeing himself branded by the critics as 'an unclean fiery imp from the pit', as 'the libidinous laureate of a pack of satyrs', having become the subject of general execration, the strain proved too great and the latent longing to conform was reinforced? Was it that the submissiveness which was a facet of his character responded as never before to the personal magnetism of Mazzini whom he now met for the first time? 'I... went down on my knees and kissed his hand,' he reported, and again, 'I know, now I have seen him, what I guessed before: whenever he has said to anyone "go and be killed because I tell you", they have gone and been killed because he told them. Who wouldn't, I should like to know?' And now Mazzini ordered him to give up 'the absurd immoral French art for art's sake system'. Swinburne gave it up and devoted his genius to the utilitarian end of furthering a cause that was in fact already lost. *Songs before Sunrise* was the result—perhaps the only volume of political poems in the language that is a completely successful work of art. But the synthesis had disintegrated. Sade and the 'theory of the diabolic government of this world' had lapsed. There was perhaps another reason for this. For the first time he was finding a more physical outlet for his desires: 'My life has been enlivened of late by a fair friend who keeps a maison de supplices à la Rodin....' Fantasies no longer clamoured for expression. But the synthesis abandoned, his genius entered upon a decline: *Bothwell* is not comparable to *Chastelard*, *Erechtheus to Atalanta*, or the *Poems and Ballads* of 1878 to the first series of 1866. There are admirable passages in all these volumes, but it becomes increasingly clear that for all their fluent metres, their elaborate cadences, their brilliance of technique, the fire is lacking and the fervour forced. At last, in 1879, weakened by alcoholic poisoning, he surrendered in his life as he had already capitulated in his art. Society, triumphant in the shape of Watts-Dunton, acquired the remains. *Songs before Sunrise*, for all its merit, was prophetic of the long and sterile twilight of The Pines.

ERIC WALTER WHITE

STRAVINSKY—LATTER-DAY SYMPHONIST

I

AFTER the Paris productions of his first three ballets, *The Fire Bird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*, had taken the musical circles of Western Europe by storm, Stravinsky settled with his family in Switzerland for reasons of health; but what had started by being a voluntary move became an involuntary exile when the First World War broke out. Although he wrote a number of important stage works during the war years, only *The Soldier's Tale* reached production, and that for a single performance in Lausanne; so that by 1919 little was known, even by his more intimate friends, of the radical changes in standpoint and aim that had occurred since *The Rite of Spring* and *The Nightingale* had dazzled and dazed pre-war audiences with their kaleidoscopic chromaticism, recondite instrumentation and hypnotic insistence on undeviating metres. Hence arose a number of misunderstandings—on the part of his collaborators, for instance, during the composition of his new ballet *Pulcinella*, when they failed to appreciate the more modest scale to which he was now working and to adjust their contributions accordingly, and on the part of his public and critics, both then and later, when they complained that instead of playing for safety by exploiting the early and popular vein opened up by *The Fire Bird* and *Petrushka* and giving them music they knew they could understand and like, he was hoodwinking them with a number of baffling and unnecessary experiments.

Some twenty years later, the outbreak of the Second World War found him—by then a naturalized French citizen—on the point of delivering the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University; and, by the time he had finished addressing his audience of American students on the subject of Musical Poetics, Europe was in a state of disintegration, Germany having over-run Denmark and Norway, the Low Countries and France. Remembering how he had been cut off from his original fatherland during the First World War and condemned to a period of artistically

and financially embarrassing exile in Switzerland, he was naturally anxious to avoid a repetition of the same sort of occurrence. Accordingly, he decided to settle in the United States, and in December 1945 changed his nationality for the second time, becoming an American citizen.

The years 1939–46 have been prolific ones—thirteen new works belong to this period, most of them the result of special commissions. For instance, the Symphony in C (1940) and the Symphony in Three Movements (1945) were written for the Chicago and New York Symphony Orchestras respectively; *Ode* (1943) for Serge Koussevitzky in memory of his wife Natalia; the *Scherzo à la Russe* (1943) for the Blue Network programme and performed by the Paul Whiteman Band; and *Babel*, a cantata for reciter, male voice choir and orchestra, for Nathaniel Shilkret, who had invited six other composers to join in writing a cycle of Biblical episodes entitled *Genesis* (1943). This by no means exhausts the tale of Stravinsky's American commissions; but it is sufficient to show that his latest compositions cover a wide range—from full-scale symphonies to light music and jazz. For some time they were comparatively unknown outside the United States; but now a number of them have been performed in this country. American recordings have been issued of the *Four Norwegian Moods* (1942), *Scènes de Ballet* (1944), and *Ebony Concerto* (1945), and a few scores have been published; so it is at last possible to get some general idea of his latest music and to judge whether it merely confirms and consolidates previous tendencies or marks yet a new stage of development in his protean career.

II

When Ernest Ansermet returned to Switzerland in 1917 after conducting an American tour of the Russian Ballet, he brought back with him a selection of ragtime material. This he handed over to Stravinsky, who, being (as he avows in the *Chronicle* of his life) fascinated 'by its truly popular appeal, its freshness and the novel rhythm which so clearly revealed its Negro origin', decided to adapt it to suit his own purposes. It may have been accidental that the miniature orchestra of seven chosen to accompany *The Soldier's Tale* in some ways resembled the 1915 New Orleans Dixieland Band with its clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano and drums; but the inclusion of a Tango and Ragtime

among the Princess's dances was deliberate, as was also the subsequent composition of a separate *Ragtime* for eleven instruments (1918) and a *Piano-Rag-Music* (1919). At that time, Stravinsky's flirtation with jazz was short-lived, partly because there was really little it could teach him about rhythm and syncopation that he did not know already, partly because its chromatic tendency towards diminished intervals ran counter to his then predominantly diatonic sympathies, but mainly because, as a Russian expatriate living in France, he was too widely removed from the American scene to be able to appreciate the living tradition of jazz and to assimilate it to his idiom.

Residence in the United States, however, seems to have altered the perspective. In 1940 he wrote a *Tango*, of which it is instructive to compare the piano score with the *Piano-Rag-Music*. The patch-work construction of the earlier piece, with its percussive and improvisatory style, has given way to a more formally organized movement where a predominantly matt piano timbre is used to offset the 'singing tone' of lyrical passages like the trio with its delicate Tchaikovsky flavour. Five years later, the *Ebony Concerto* showed how successfully a straight composer could tackle the composition of symphonic jazz and how brilliantly a band like Woody Herman's could deal with a score where nothing is left to improvisation, but the utmost discipline has to be exacted from each of the players if the chording is to be executed with the right degree of snap and the contrapuntal texture rendered taut and resilient. This is undoubtedly one of Stravinsky's most enjoyable and accessible works; and to those whose approach to music is determined by their addiction for jazz, it will not only have an immediate appeal, but may also open up much wider musical vistas.

III

At various stages in his career, Stravinsky has proclaimed his considered approval of certain composers—Bach and Bellini, for example, Weber and Verdi, Glinka and Gounod—but he has reserved his most intense enthusiasm and abiding loyalty for Tchaikovsky.

Later, he was to join Diaghilev in an act of pious homage—the revival of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Alhambra Theatre, London; and for this occasion he undertook to orchestrate

certain numbers that had been cut at the ballet's first performance at St. Petersburg and were missing from the published score. He also wrote Diaghilev an open letter from Paris, dated 10 October 1921, in which he analysed his feelings towards Tchaikovsky's music. He characterized it as manifesting above all the qualities of 'simplicity, naïvety and spontaneity', and praised Tchaikovsky for possessing 'the power of *melody*, centre of gravity in every symphony, opera or ballet composed by him', adding that this 'is an extremely rare and precious gift'. This statement of his should be considered in conjunction with the passage in his *Musical Poetics* where, speaking of the Phenomenon of Music, he says: 'I begin to think, in agreement with public opinion, that melody must retain its place at the top of the hierarchy of musical elements. It is the most important of these elements, not because it is the most immediately perceptible, but because it is the dominant voice of the symphony.'

In view of this, it was revealing to find that when in 1928 he was invited by Ida Rubinstein to write a ballet for her company, he decided to borrow the whole of his melodic material from a selection of Tchaikovsky's songs and piano pieces. Although *The Fairy's Kiss* as a whole can be criticized as being flabby and broken-backed in construction, the stylistic handling and the instrumentation show that Stravinsky was anxious to set off, not to mar, the spontaneous delicacy and grace of Tchaikovsky's lyrical fragments. It was soon evident that these qualities, so characteristic of Tchaikovsky, were not going to remain alien to Stravinsky's own personal idiom; and the *Capriccio* (1929) showed how rapidly the process of assimilation was setting in. Although this line of development was consolidated by later works like *A Card Game*, its full flowering has not been seen until the composition of *Scènes de Ballet*. This was written for Billy Rose's revue, *The Seven Lively Arts*, which ran on Broadway during the 1944-5 season; but only a few fragments were actually used for that purpose, and the work was first performed in its entirety at a series of concerts given by the New York Philharmonic in the winter of 1945 with Stravinsky as conductor.

There is nothing to show whether these *Scènes* were composed to any preconceived plan of action; but as they stand, they seem to imply a *ballet blanc* with a dance scheme where variations for the ballerina and solo male dancer, and a *pas de deux* for both, are

interspersed with dances for the *corps de ballet* and passages of pantomime, the whole work ending with an Apotheosis. To some extent this scheme calls to mind *Apollo Musagetes*, Stravinsky's other *ballet blanc*: but whereas the lack of conflict in the action of the earlier ballet was reflected in the unclouded Mediterranean radiance of its music for strings, there is a strongly developed dramatic, even if plotless, element in *Scènes de Ballet*. The resilience of the rhythm, the gaiety of the orchestration, the carefully characterized grace and virility of the dance variations and the *gusto* of the whole score, are most attractive and in the best tradition of Stravinsky's work for the stage.

The movement entitled Apotheosis invites comparison with the similar movements in *Apollo* and *The Fairy's Kiss*. Whereas previously Stravinsky had succeeded in obtaining an impression of transcendent calmness (in *Apollo*) and of glacial refrigeration (in *The Fairy's Kiss*) by exploiting the device of slowing up various residual themes—'ending by augmentation', it might be called—in *Scènes de Ballet* he reverts to the sort of chordal processional he had used earlier in the Symphonies of Wind Instruments as a tribute to the memory of Debussy and which reappears at the end of the Symphony in C. Strictly speaking, these processions of his usually consist of a double sequence of bitonal synchronized wind chords: but to suggest that they convey the impression of an earthly funeral procession would be misleading. There is a brazen mathematical splendour about them, reminiscent of the planets moving in Pythagorean harmony through their appointed mansions.

IV

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Stravinsky's development during the last quarter of a century has been his concentration on symphonic form.

It is true that in his apprentice years he wrote a piano sonata (unpublished) and an orchestral Symphony in E Flat (opus 1) as academic exercises in form: but by the time he had reached maturity with the composition of *The Fire Bird*, a string of commissions for Diaghilev and his company seemed to make it unnecessary for him to pursue his symphonic researches further. In any case, the ultra-chromatic harmonic system of *The King of the Stars* and *The Rite of Spring* could only with great difficulty have been adapted for symphonic use.

Stravinsky's retreat from the chromatic to the diatonic during the years of his exile in Switzerland was confirmed after the First World War by his deliberately reasoned conversion to the tenets of classicism. This was bound ultimately to lead to an exploration of the possibilities of adapting symphonic form to his particular idiom; but its immediate result was slightly disconcerting, for the so-called Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1920) proved on examination to belong stylistically to his earlier period and to be symphonies in the acoustical but not the formal sense of that word. Not until the composition of the Octet for Wind Instruments three years later did he definitely start to write again in symphonic form; and his output during the next sixteen years—that is to say, up to the outbreak of the Second World War—included a choral symphony, a piano sonata and five concertos.

Four of these concertos were for solo instruments and orchestra and showed him to be searching for a symphonic form that would enable soloist and orchestra both to present and to exchange their characteristic musical material. Reciprocity rather than rivalry was the keynote. At the same time, his strong feeling for tonality made it possible for his main sonata-form movements to be built up in conformity with the fundamental binary principles if he so desired: but the type and order of the other movements chosen to make up the symphonic molecule were frequently varied. Although the central position was invariably taken by a slow moment—the Violin Concerto has two such movements entitled *Aria I* and *Aria II*—a scherzo was generally missing, and the form of the finale sometimes gave him considerable trouble. In the Piano Concerto of 1924, it is the weakest part of the triptych; in the *Capriccio* and the Violin Concerto, he devises a *capriccioso* movement, which seems to partake of some of the characteristics of fantasy, scherzo and rondo; and in the *Symphony of Psalms* he solves the problem by reversing the usual order, placing the symphonic *allegro* last and prefacing it with a Prelude and Double Fugue.

The two symphonies he wrote during the Second World War show a further advance in his attempt to organize his musical invention in symphonic form. The Symphony in C seems to adhere closely to the traditional layout of a four-movement symphony. Here the difficulty of the finale is solved by the fact that both first and last movements are taken *alla breve*, which

means that Stravinsky can apply to the material in both these movements the test of reciprocity that he had already developed in his concertos. The first movement (*Moderato alla breve*) accordingly has a foretaste of the main theme of the last movement in an episode marked *Tempo agitato senza troppo accelerare*, while the last movement (*Tempo giusto alla breve*) refers back several times to the principal subject of the first movement, and particularly to its initial three notes, which, placed as it were under a microscope, become a powerful motto to the whole work.

Although the formal plan of this Symphony is well worked out, the result is somewhat disconcerting, if not disappointing, since it never seems to reach full symphonic stature. Why is this? The most satisfactory explanation would appear to be that, as Stravinsky himself had already pointed out, 'melody is the dominant voice of the symphony', but here the principal subject of the first movement, which occurs at least a dozen times in the course of that movement and impresses its character forcibly on the work as a whole, is a tender capricious melody, which twines itself round an implicit *arpeggio* of the common chord like a creeper round a glass pillar. It lacks the gravity of a true symphonic melody. In addition, though Stravinsky writes for a normal-sized symphony orchestra, his particular *concertante* style of instrumentation demands not only chamber music standards of performance, but also chamber music conditions of reception. This makes it difficult for both performers and audience to do justice to the work.

When one turns to the Symphony in Three Movements, these particular shortcomings disappear. Stravinsky is found to have reverted to fully symphonic orchestration—but with a subtle difference. For this work, piano and harp are added to the normal-sized symphony orchestra and play specially important roles. The first movement (during which the harp is silent) is made up of two distinct, but interlocking sections: one may be looked on as a symphonic *allegro*, and here the piano acts as an orchestral instrument and confines itself to the business of reinforcing the orchestral accompaniment; the other is virtually a piano concerto, and in it the piano has a solo part of considerable importance. The way these two distinct entities are fused into a single movement is one of Stravinsky's most brilliant and original achievements. As pendant and contrast, the slow movement is a

decorative *andante*, during which the piano in its turn is silent and the harp imitates and elaborates the business of an orchestra that has been reduced by the omission of all brass (three horns excepted) and percussion. For the last movement, both harp and piano rejoin the orchestral ranks and are used solely to reinforce the general instrumental texture, with the exception of a *fugato* passage marked *alla breve*, where piano and harp are entrusted with the first two fugal entries respectively.

But perhaps the most interesting feature of this composition is that in it Stravinsky shows that it is possible for him to recapture much of the powerful and exasperated mood of an early work like *The Rite of Spring* and re-create it within the ordered framework of a mature and classical symphony.

V

And what in these later works has happened, one may ask, to Stravinsky's Russian idiom—his Slavonic birthright—which was a recurring, if not a constant element in his music until about 1920, when he deliberately tried to abandon it and to affiliate himself to the main Italian and French traditions?

Some years ago, after hearing a song of Stravinsky's, Miss Edith Sitwell wrote in one of her poems, 'The brown bear rambles in his chain'. This was undoubtedly the bear who was to be found shambling across the evening fairground in *Petrushka*, whose pelt had been worn by the sinister elders in *The Rite of Spring* during their sacrifice of virginal youth to Yarilo, and whose song (in *Three Tales for Children*) had been written for the special delectation of Stravinsky's own family. The time came when Stravinsky dropped the chain and tried to lose the bear; but though it rambled off into the dark wood, there are moments when it tries to return to its old master. For instance, it made an unexpected reappearance towards the end of the classical opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*, when the messenger and shepherd told the story of the discovery of the abandoned baby Oedipus on Mount Cithaeron; and it even peeps into the last movement of the Sonata for Two Pianos (1944) and into the Symphony in Three Movements.

Although such glimpses of the past are not unwelcome, one cannot help sympathizing with this American composer's anxiety to get rid of the animal, for if it were encouraged and became too friendly, its embrace might easily prove fatal.

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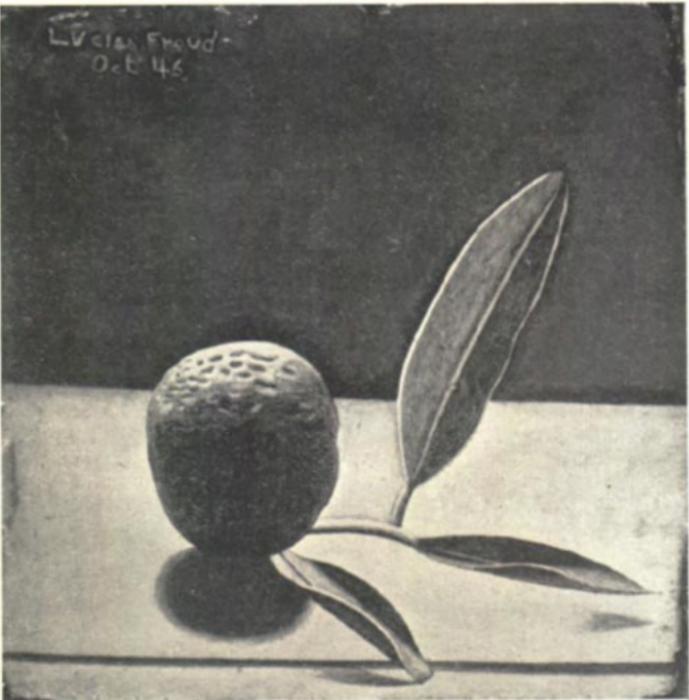
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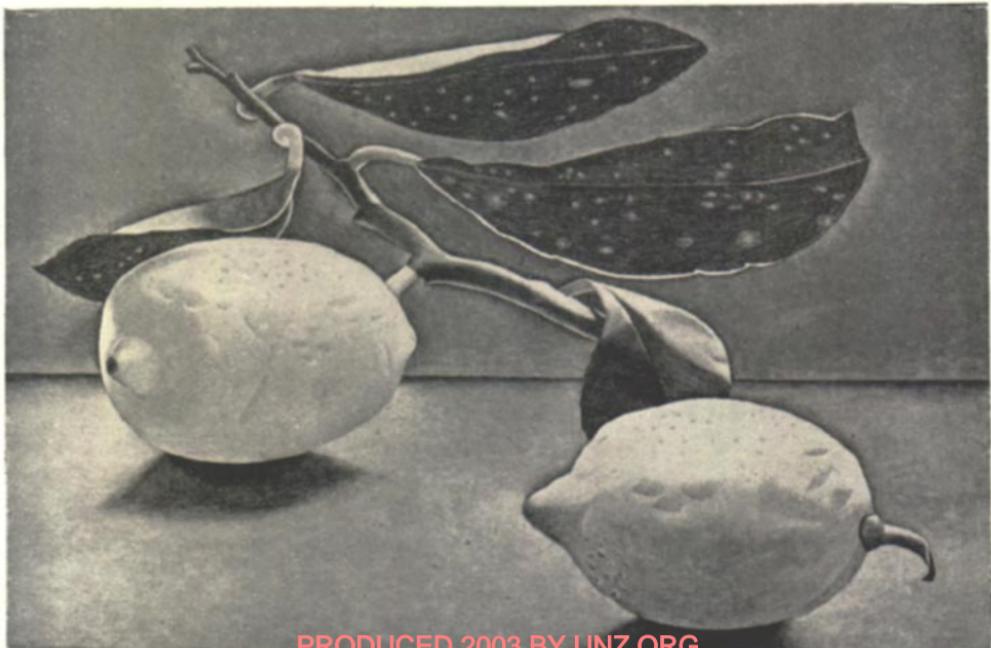
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